



Emanuel School

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

MONDAY 2 OCTOBER 2023

FROM THE HEADMASTER

Mr R Milne

I hope that you find the 4th edition of this annual bulletin uplifting and enlightening.

The publication illustrates the school's determination and collective reflection and progress. We have a great band of pupils involved in meaningful debate on a wide range of societal topics, and it's been great to see this sustained since we began many of our societies in 2020. Perhaps one of the reasons for the enduring energy from all involved is that we are seeing tangible and positive change in our community.

We have made practical adaptations to our school's thinking on language, on day-to-day actions, and on parts of our curriculum.

We have also hosted important events on the school site, signifying our commitments to everyone at Emanuel and beyond.

RECOMMENDED SHOWS TO WATCH:

Dreaming Whilst Black
Available on BBC iPlayer



We are Black & British
Netflix



CALEB FEMI

Chiara (U6AF)

Caleb Femi is a British-Nigerian author, director, poet, photographer and former school teacher. Born in Kano, Nigeria, he moved to London when he was seven to join his parents on the North Peckham Estate- an environment that became the foundation for most of his writing, chronicling his experiences as a young man living in the city. Femi taught KS4 English from 2014-2016, leaving to pursue a more creative career after being named London's first Young People's Laureate. His previous accolades include; winning the Roundhouse Poetry Slam in 2015, being in the Dazed 100 list of the next generation shaping youth culture in 2017 and receiving the Felix Dennis Prize of the Best First Collection after publishing his first book, 'Poor' in 2020.

It is in this incredible debut that Femi delivers a moving narrative across 57 poems, touching on politics and oppression, boyhood, romance, trauma, architecture, gentrification, grief and general experience as a young black man. The writing is intermittently accompanied by his own photographs: portraits of 'mandem', monochrome landscapes of council estates, powerful and saturated shots of friends rejoicing- all visual references that aim to humanise marginalised communities and supplement his storytelling.

Stories of 'Boys who feel like halloween costumes, who wear winter coats in summer heat', 'Boys who look to polar bears for lessons on how to grow white fur on black skin'. Stories of prejudice, 'That's what it feels like to be black here: like you're dead and alive at the same time. And though these experts spoke on the mayhem, nothing was said about the maddening of grief'. Stories of culture underrepresented in mainstream poetry, 'His mum (church Head Caterer) would dish us moist portions: jollof, curry goat, plantain & all. We would eat while she hummed a benediction & we would leave full in body & in spirit.'

The autobiographical nature of Femi's work meant it was hard for him to conceal the experiences he feared would define him in the public eye, for example, his involvement in a gang and the time he was shot at 17. Glorification of such events is rampant in the media, however Femi focuses on how much of it is triggered by structural violence as opposed to gang violence. He is vocal about the impact of poor infrastructure, government negligence and lack of opportunities and funding which he explains leads to boredom and in turn catalyses gang violence. He makes this point in 'And They Knew Light' when he describes 'living in a house with more exit wounds than fire exits'. In 'Survivor's Guilt', Femi indicates that in the face of hopelessness there are two paths, 'gang signs or prayers- what one cannot solve the other surely will. My fingers are bilingual like that'. This again underlines one of his central messages: the importance of outlets.

His solution is to make the arts more accessible and expose young people to creative practices. He combats the idea that poetry is a 'rarefied, elitist art form' by reciting his work to self-made drill beats and incorporating slang such as 'It's a sticky one still' (referencing Headie One lyrics) and 'Are you safe, my g?'. Femi continues shattering norms by challenging masculinity and racial stereotypes, and is especially 'wary of estate life and gang violence being the only sorts of stories we hear about young black men', placing emphasis on emotions, vulnerability and human connection instead.

The inclusion of his poem, 'Thirteen', in the GCSE poetry anthology, 'Worlds and Lives', (published September 2022) goes to show that diverse voices have more of a place in the curriculum, illustrating the power that words have to create a truly multicultural education system.



UNSCRAMBLING THE SATOR SQUARE

Mr M Morrison

Of all the doodling and drawings etched on school desks, train carriages and crumbling brick walls, one acrostic scribble is 'the most familiar lettered square in the Western world'. So claims the Encyclopaedia Britannica when describing the SATOR Square, uncovered in areas across the Roman Empire, ranging from Europe, Asia Minor and North Africa.

The SATOR Square can be viewed in engravings in Coptic settlements in North Africa, and has invited multiple interpretations as to its meaning. A far cry from 'taco cat' or 'no melon, no lemon', here we have a five-word palindrome, which reads 'SATOR AREPO TENET OPERA ROTAS'. The puzzle reads the same both vertically and horizontally, back to front and from top to bottom. Translated from the Latin, these words could be rendered as 'The sower Arepo works the wheels with care', or very loosely as 'As ye sow, so shall ye reap'. It is variously interpreted as a Christian symbol, a magic spell to cure rabies, a tester of wind direction and even an invocation to Satan.

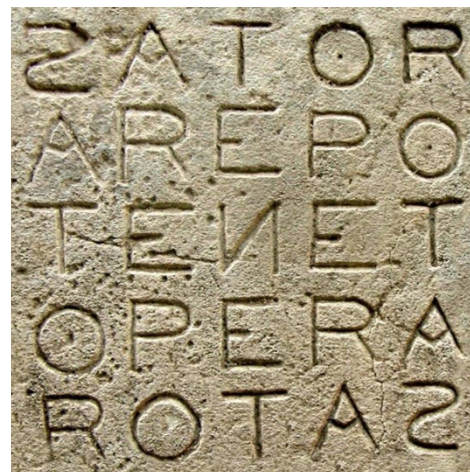
Egypt adopted Christianity in the mid-first century AD, with Saint Mark as its founder, according to the Coptic Orthodox Church. As first-century Christians were a persecuted minority, they used secret insignia to communicate and identify themselves to one another. The word 'TENET' can be read as a crucifix shape across the middle of the Square, and would serve as a striking yet subtle marker of Christian identity. This central element of the back-to-front cryptogram inspired Christopher Nolan's film *Tenet*, a science-fiction thriller based in a secretive organisation which, rather like the Square's palindromic powers, can reverse the flow of time.

The translation of the SATOR Square to a Christian in North Africa would likely have related to Jesus'

parable of the Sower in Matthew 13:3-9. But if we delve deeper into the cryptic arrangement of the Square, we can double up and rearrange its 25 letters to form a new phrase: PATER NOSTER ('our father'), with two As and Os left behind, alluding to Revelation 1:8: 'I am the Alpha and Omega... the one who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.'

Later in the sixth century, an Ethiopian inscription cites the names of the five nails in the cross used at Jesus' crucifixion as SADOR, ALADOR, DANET, ADERA and RODAS, a distorted version of the five words which form the SATOR Square.

Throughout North Africa, Christianity was embraced as the religion of dissent against the expanding Roman Empire, at a time when the emperor Nero was allegedly setting Christians on fire as human candles to provide lighting for his garden parties. The secretive meanings and messages uncovered in the SATOR Square give a sense of these quietly rebellious voices, resisting Roman rule and religion. The transformative power of identity markers and emblems is revealed in the multiple translations, meanings and connotations drawn from the Square. To this day, our understanding develops, as more SATOR Squares are unearthed, changing, adapting, and contorting previous interpretations, to lead us in as many directions as the Square's jumbled lettering.



MAMADY SIDEBE MALI TO THE PREMIER LEAGUE

Mr J Lea

Mamady Sidebe was born in Mali and at an early age his family moved to France. His Father was a very strict disciplinarian and devout Muslim. Mama would play football at every opportunity, but his father was not a lover of the game and was against his son playing for the local teams as he would be coming home late from training and because the area was plagued by gangs and drug dealing, he didn't want his son dragged into that culture. Mama learnt quickly how to look after himself and his younger siblings.

Against his father's wishes Mama managed to play for the local youth teams, he also managed to get trials at lower league teams and was offered a contract at Massey Palaiseau where he played youth team football for a year. In this time a scout from Red Star 93 spotted him, and he signed for them and played two seasons before moving to La Paris Chareton. It was here that Swansea City were alerted to his talents, and he moved there. After one season he was signed by Tony Pulis for Gillingham. When Pulis moved to Stoke City he signed Mama and it was here that he had his best spell in football. Although he wasn't the most skilful, he made up for it with his great work ethic, and this and the fact that he played with a smile on his face, made him a firm favourite with the Stoke supporters. He also struck up a great partnership with the mercurial Ricardo Fuller.

During his time at Stoke he suffered a horrendous life-threatening injury while playing for his native Mali against Togo. The crowd rioted after the match and Mama was dragged through the dressing room window by the mob and he severed an artery in his arm on the broken glass. Luckily the paramedics got to him quickly and then he was rushed to hospital. It was four months before he was able to play for Stoke again and Mama understandably, refused to play for Mali again.

Mama became even more of a favourite with the Stoke faithful when he scored a headed goal against Aston Villa from one of Rory Delap's famous long throws which proved to be the winner in what was Stoke's first win back in the Premier League after twenty-seven years in the lower divisions.

When Mama retired from football he opened a French patisserie in Stoke where his family had settled. He wasn't sure at first if the people of Stoke would take to his patisserie but it became a great success.

Sol Sidebe, Mama's son has been at the Stoke academy since the age of ten and recently became one of the youngest players ever to pull on the red and white stripes when he made his first team debut against West Brom at just 16 years of age. He also made his debut for England U17 at about the same time. Mama had been a great favourite while playing for Stoke, but also made a life for his family and himself in the Potteries after he retired from the game. I have met him and if other Malians are like him, may many more set up home in this country.

