



Emanuel School

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

WEDNESDAY 4th OCTOBER 2023

BREATHE

Miss KC Smith

Be kind to yourself, be understanding, be patient,
But how can I be like that when I know that I'm becoming complacent?
Be open minded, be becoming, be happy, be sad,
Be all of those feelings but don't waste time being mad!
Be reflective, be forthcoming, be protective yet bold,
And do all of it now, because before you know it, you'll be old!

Bask in the high and learn from the lows,
Because, my darling girl, that's just the way the wind blows.
No one has the right answer, no one can make sense of the mess,
No one but you can relieve you of worry, tension, pain and stress.

'Must remember to breathe' he said, because the rhythm is calming,
Don't you do that without thinking? Erm, that's slightly alarming.
Of course he does, well maybe, sometimes it is all he can manage,
Sometimes just walking and talking is like wearing a uncomfortable bandage.
Sometimes his mind feels like spaghetti, like Apple headphones all tangled,
Like that top you put in the washing machine, that always comes out all mangled.

It's one day at a time, it's putting one foot in front of the other,
It's connecting with a stranger and saying 'hey, it's okay brother'.
It's making a decision, a conscious choice,
It's choosing yourself and your sanity rather than that 'more important' invoice.

It's a choice that you make and it changes daily,
'You're doing more than enough' - have you told yourself this lately?
It's the choice of being in a pool and forcing yourself to swim lengths,
or paddling calmly in the ocean, simply feeling less tense.

A PRECIOUS GIFT

Mr R Worrell

"Sharp scratch" the nurse replies before inserting a needle into my arm. No, I'm not receiving an injection, just donating a pint of blood. The appointment takes about 30 minutes, only a small amount of time out of my day to potentially save a life. You may already know from your biology lesson that there are different blood groups following the ABO classification system such as O+, A-, AB+, etc. Do you know your blood type? What about your subtype? Is that even important?

Well, my blood type is O+ with Ro subtype. What does this mean? It means that my donation can be given to patients with O+, A+, B+ and AB+ blood groups. However, as I possess the Ro subtype (which is rare in the UK), my 'gift' is reserved for one of the 15,000 people in England with sickle cell disorder, an inherited disorder of haemoglobin which predominately affects people from black African and Caribbean backgrounds. Individuals with sickle cell have abnormal, or 'sickle shaped', red blood cells. This means that oxygen is unable to circulate around the body efficiently, ultimately resulting in a painful 'sickle cell crisis' which can last on average five to seven days and can cause tissue and organ damage. Therefore, people with this disorder are dependent on regular transfusions of blood, in some cases up to 12 units every four to six weeks. The unique protein structures in ethnically matched blood helps to alleviate symptoms for a longer period of time, while reducing the potential side effects after a transfusion such as pain, stroke and acute pulmonary deterioration.

As of April 2023, there were 26,000 active Ro subtype donors in England which represents 3% of total donors. One generous man, dubbed the 'Ro Centurion' is sixty-one-year-old Peter Jones, a retired civil servant from Southall. At the age of sixty-one he has donated blood over 100 times, making him the leading Black donor of the Ro subtype. When asked about why he donates, he

modestly states that, "I am sure all blood is in demand," he says, "but I'm gratified to know that my contribution is important."

I have only donated 9 times, so it will be a while before I reach a half century. There is no cure for sickle cell disorder, and due to lack of investment there are very few reliable medicines to treat this condition. Therefore, people afflicted with blood disorders need the aid of someone they have never met, to ease the chronic pain they experience and live a near normal existence.

If you are between the ages of 17 and 65, consider whether you could be a blood donor, especially if you are from a minority ethnic background, every pint will be greatly appreciated. Furthermore, to those who are too young to donate, please contemplate what small gesture you can make to help someone, whether at school or in your local community. Small actions can make a big difference to the lives of others.

All statistical data and quotes from NHS Blood & Transplant 2023.



Save a life Give blood

THE KINGDOMS OF AKSUM AND ABYSSINIA

THE OVERLOOKED HOLY LAND

Ms L Aitken-Burt

The Kingdom of Aksum was one of the earliest unified states in medieval Africa, the first sub-Saharan African state to mint its own coinage and one of the first nations in the world to adopt Christianity as a state religion. The Kingdom of Aksum traces its origins to the 1st century CE and covered the regions of modern Ethiopia, Eritrea, Sudan, Djibouti and Somalia in north-east Africa. It grew immensely powerful and rich by controlling trade routes to the Mediterranean through the Red Sea from China, India and Arabia as well as the rest of Africa.

In 327 CE, King Ezana I of Aksum officially adopted Christianity as his state religion, just 15 years after the Roman emperor Constantine. Tradition has it that a Christian missionary from the Holy Land named Frumentius was shipwrecked and enslaved in Ethiopia and forced to work as a tutor to the young Ezana.

The Aksumite kings were patrons of the arts and Christianity. They financed the construction of churches and monasteries as well as translations of the Bible using a unique script called Ge'ez (pronounced geh-urrz). Related to Arabic and Hebrew, this script is still in use in Ethiopia today.

The Kingdom of Aksum had access to lucrative goods from other parts of Africa such as ivory from elephant tusks and rhino horns, as well as gold and emeralds. The Byzantine emperors were very keen on these objects as status symbols. In exchange, Aksum received goods such as wine and olive oil, as well as textiles, glass vessels and beads, and iron and bronze weapons and lamps. At the remains of the capital city of Aksum in northern Ethiopia, more than 100 granite obelisks have been found. They were probably used as tomb markers for members of the royal family and were carved with false doors and windows.

In 1270, the Kingdom of Aksum's former lands were consolidated by a new dynasty that claimed descent from the House of Solomon. Their first ruler, Yekuno-Amlak, was from Amhara (near modern Addis Ababa, Ethiopia), which became the capital of a new kingdom, Abyssinia. He traced his origins to 950 BCE, claiming that the Jewish King Solomon of Jerusalem and Queen Makeda of Sheba had a son called Menelik who travelled to Ethiopia carrying the Ark of the Covenant. This was the box said to contain the stone tablets of the Ten Commandments given to Moses. Although it is forbidden to view the artefact, it is believed that the Church of Maryam TSION in northern Ethiopia still holds the Ark of the Covenant to this day.

The Solomonic dynasty remained in power in Ethiopia until 1974 when the last emperor of Abyssinia, Haile Selassie, was deposed by a military coup and died. Whilst East Africa has suffered from further coups and civil wars in recent decades, it should be remembered that the power of the African kingdoms of Aksum and Abyssinia lasted centuries, so much so that Ethiopia was one of the only African countries to successfully resist European colonisation in the 19th century. Its rich heritage of early Christianity is also an important part of both European and world history.

Adapted from the Collins Knowing World History series, co-authored by Laura Aitken-Burt <https://collins.co.uk/collections/knowning-history>



TOUSSAINT LOUVERTURE

Isabelle (L6TWG)

Toussaint Louverture is a name you've probably never heard of but he was an incredibly significant figure in abolitionism and is known as the founding father of Haiti. He fought and won against Europe's major powers, as well as inspiring enslaved and colonised peoples to seek freedom and independence. Though he died one year before Saint-Dominique became Haiti, his actions created the first black sovereign state, and only the second republic in the Western world after the United States of America.

Born enslaved into the wealthiest colony in the Americas in around 1743, Louverture was taught by his educated father in African medicinal practices. He also studied books in French and Haitian Creole, before he was freed at the age of 33.

In 1791, the atmosphere of revolution in France reached its colony in the Americas, and a series of violent revolts began. France, heavily reliant on the prosperity of Saint-Dominique, tried to stop the conflict peacefully. Rebel leaders refused. Louverture was initially hesitant, preferring to farm his land, as he had for 15 years after he became free. He then joined the revolution as a physician, but then quickly rose to the rank of general, due to his strategic skills and leadership.

Louverture's canny tactics are shown by the fluctuating loyalties of his forces, switching sides depending on whatever was best for his people. Initially, they fought against the French with the Spanish, and then for the French after he manoeuvred them to abolish slavery on Saint-Dominique in return for his support. Once the other foreign powers were pushed out, Louverture seized control of Saint-Dominique and, in 1801, established a constitution where he was leader for life of the free, autonomous, and prosperous island.

Napoleon's conquest tried to reinstate slavery on plantations to Saint-Dominique and he sent a general to arrest Louverture because Napoleon saw him as a threat. In 1802 Louverture was imprisoned in the French Alps. Despite his absence, French control was swiftly dismantled in 1803 by rebel forces. Jean-Jacques Dessalines declared an independent state of 'Haiti' in 1804, months after Toussaint Louverture died, as he was born, in chains.

