



Emanuel School

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

FRIDAY 6TH OCTOBER 2023

THE HARLEM RENAISSANCE

Jack (U6AEM)

The Harlem Renaissance was an artistic and social explosion of culture in the neighbourhood of Harlem, New York, beginning in the 1910s, lasting until the mid-1930s. This established Harlem as a 'black cultural mecca' and its influence can still be seen today.

This important movement was a resurgence of African American culture and is seen as a golden age of literature (both poetry and prose), music, stage performance and art. Harlem was intended to be an upper-class white neighbourhood, but unsustainable development led to an abundance of empty homes and desperate landlords. A population boom, known as the Great Migration, was sparked by large numbers of African Americans travelling from the South into New York, finally settling in Harlem – by 1920, roughly 300,000 had moved north.

The movement was not exclusionary or adversarial. In fact, the Harlem Renaissance was ecumenical in that, while it was an artistic celebration of black culture, many white residents of New York were influenced to visit Harlem. For example, anthropologist and folklorist Zora Neale Hurston's publication 'FIRE!' exoticized the lives of black residents and inspired people of all colours and creeds to visit Harlem. Jean Toomer's book, 'Cane,' expressed the feelings of many residents, both about their suffering and the empowerment that the Harlem Renaissance enacted.

Jazz was influential in spreading the beauty and jubilation of the Harlem Renaissance across the world. Louis Armstrong's music percolated through the speakeasies and, like other impactful figures' work, led to many white people also displaying their support for the Harlem Renaissance.

The Harlem Renaissance was significantly damaged by the stock market crash of 1929 and the Great Depression. However, it still managed to retain its important until 1933 – the end of the Prohibition. This meant white patrons no longer had to travel uptown to seek illegal alcohol in Harlem. Tragically, the Harlem Race Riot of 1935 led to three deaths, hundreds injured, and millions of dollars of property damage. This served as the final signifier of the end of the Harlem Renaissance.

However, the impact of the Harlem Renaissance was paramount. It gave all the involved artists pride and joy in how the black experience became represented, materialised and immortalised in American culture. It set the stage for the Civil Rights Movement and is still remembered as a golden age for the flourishing of African American culture.



CHEVALIER

Nico (9RET)

Ahead of this year's Black History Month, I began thinking about all the contributions black people have made to our world which have been co-opted, stolen or erased entirely. This led me to a film which came out earlier this year, 'Chevalier'. Based on the true story of a composer who would become the leader of the French army's first all black regiment.

Classical music has long been held up as lacking diversity and never was this more true than in pre-revolutionary France. 18th century Parisienne high society was as unprepared for this revolution as it was for the meteoric rise (and subsequent fall) of Joseph Bologne.

Bologne, a contemporary rival of Mozart, was a violin virtuoso and masterful fencer. The mixed-heritage child was the product of an affair between his white, Plantation owner father, and his mother, an enslaved woman. His father stole him away from his home only to abandon him at a French boarding school. Leaving him with only one piece of paternal advice, "Always be excellent. Don't give anyone a reason to tear you down." This echoed in Bologne's ears as he struggled to find acceptance as a black man in a white world. This idea of the model minority still abounds us even today; having to work so much harder than white counterparts to achieve even close to the same level of recognition. Or that your position may always be conditional.

The film depicts a winding road to stardom for Bologne as he navigates racism and violence in a society which considers him, "a sub-human species" and a blight on French society that dilutes its purity. Using fast-paced, modern storytelling we witness Bologne being knighted "Chevalier de Saint-George," and a favourite of Queen Marie-Antoinette herself.

Following the death of his father in Guadeloupe, his mother has now been granted freedom and joins her son in Paris. When his past and present collide, Chevalier finds himself between two worlds as he

is both ridiculed for being too white and derided for being, "a party trick and a pet."

Despite his celebrity status he does not go on to win the coveted position as head of the Paris Opera, when socialites write a racist petition to the Queen. This forces Chevalier to realise just how precarious his position in court is as he is told to, "go back to wherever [he] came from". At this time, he is engaging in increasingly dangerous romantic pursuits with his married, white, female lead, just as the climate in Paris becomes increasingly perilous.



Rejected by high society, his mother helps him to reconnect with his culture, telling him he is merely a, "tourist in their world," in an emotionally-charged speech about how black people have been treated, she encourages him to rage against the status quo and he joins the revolutionaries in their fight for, "liberté, égalité, fraternité".

Chevalier defiantly evades arrest at his illegal concert, being ejected to a soundtrack of his own music, proving that while you can silence one man you cannot silence an entire revolution (or race). So why have we never heard Chevalier's music or his story?

The answer is that Napoleon reinstated slavery in French territories and banned Chevalier's work, leading to much of it being destroyed. Though there is much to the rest of his story, this amazing film tells a tale of unsurpassed genius who cannot be erased from history, however hard some people may have tried to do so. Vive La Révolution!

NIKITA PARRIS

Leela (U6JED)

Nikita Parris is one of the most significant Lionesses, in my humble opinion. She made her debut for the Lionesses in 2016. Parris plays as a forward for Manchester United Women's team and has previously played for Manchester City, Everton, and Arsenal. She is not only an incredible footballer but also has spoken movingly about the importance of Black History Month, in an article for England Football, 'for me Black History Month shouldn't just be a month - Black history should be part of the school curriculum that allows people to educate themselves in order to move society forward'.



HICHAM ZEROUALI ABERDEEN FOOTBALL CLUB

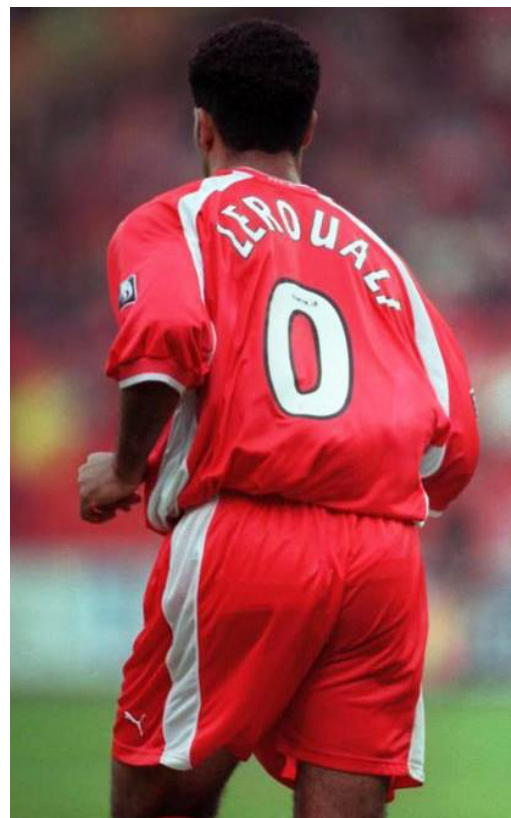
Mr P Adams

Here is a story about a footballing legend -Aberdeen FC forward,Hicham 'Zero' Zerouali - the 'Moroccan Magician'. I've supported Aberdeen Football Club my whole life and while I've experienced the highs (beating Bayern and Real in 1983), I've also experienced the lows like most supporters. Just ask Mr Andrews (Bournemouth fan).

The year 2000 was a particularly shocking year with regular cricket score thrashings at the hands of Rangers and Celtic. We also finished plum bottom of the league that year - only avoiding relegation because of league construction. The only other time Aberdeen finished bottom and avoided relegation was because of World War One! Despite the thrashings, Hicham Zerouali put a smile on our faces with his mesmeric play. He became the first player in Scotland to wear the shirt number '0' in 2000, which was subsequently outlawed the following season by the Scottish Premier League and the Premier League in England.

That year, he helped us to both the Scottish League Cup Final and the Scottish Cup Final - we didn't get to the latter again for nearly another 20 years. The scores in those matches are irrelevant! Hicham Zerouali lit up our lives and provided joy to the supporters on match days with his flamboyant play. He made me proud to be an Aberdeen fan. Tragically, Hicham was killed in a car accident in Rabat in December 2004 aged just 27. He left a girlfriend and daughter in Aberdeen. A firm fans' favourite at Aberdeen, he was known as 'Zero' to the supporters. A memorial and tribute was held at Pittodrie Stadium after he died which was attended by thousands of fans.

A total legend. Hicham Zerouali, thank you. Aberdeen fans will never forget you.



REFLECTIONS ON JAMAICA

Mr J Bowler

Over the Easter Holidays I visited Jamaica and was struck by how this beautiful island has struggled to adjust in the post-colonial world, largely due to forces beyond its control. In 1655, Oliver Cromwell captured the island as part of the Anglo-Spanish War, becoming a vital island in England's burgeoning triangular trade of enslaved people, sugar and manufactured goods. Over the ensuing torrid period, billions (trillions, by some estimations) of pounds of wealth were systematically drained from the island, depriving the Jamaican people of investment, dignity, viable infrastructure and a prosperous future.

I visited the region of Clarendon, indicated in red below. This southern tip was a major centre of the sugar plantations during and after slavery, with all the locals remembering the Tate & Lyle sugar cane fields in their lifetimes. These areas stretch over the horizon (pictured), once verdant symbols of oppression and yoke, now desolate, shrub-ridden and scorched. I was astonished to learn that Tate & Lyle still own these fields and have allowed them to fall into disrepair. There is a palpable sense of injustice that the friendly, house-hold name has allowed this to happen, and raises pertinent questions of what reparations should look like.

There is discussion of the land being repurposed, possibly for sugar again, which could lead to well overdue investment; and some apprenticeships have been set up with UK charities to provide opportunities for employment training. Some argue this does not go far enough, but Black History Month provides us space to reflect on how the shadow of the 17th - 20th centuries casts a long shadow that we cannot ignore without precise and copious addressal.

