

A COLLECTION OF STORIES REFLECTING ON CARIBBEAN-BRITISH LIFE IN LONDON TO CELEBRATE TATE BRITAIN'S LIFE BETWEEN ISLANDS

LIFE BETWEEN ISLANDS IN LONDON

To celebrate *Life Between Islands*, an exhibition exploring 70 years of Caribbean-British art at Tate Britain, we invited artists, community leaders and colleagues from Tate's BAME network to share their stories about the places and spaces across London that mean the most to them.

Keep an eye out for these Caribbean-British stories in your local neighbourhood or read their contributions here – there's over 30 to discover!



SCAN TO DISCOVER MORE

● RECORDS AND RITES OF PASSAGE HAPPENED HERE

People's Sound Records
[11 All Saints Rd, W11 1HA](#)

"People's Sound is an old-fashioned record shop. The exterior is all hand-painted and beautiful. It's like a time capsule, you walk in and immediately feel that you're in the past. The layout is like an art installation, like a Mike Nelson, it's got that lived-in sense of history about it. When I first moved into West London it was brilliant for dubplates and vinyl. It's a real music person's place. I felt like I was coming of age when my Dad first took me to the record shop with him. It was a bastion for the older West Indian guys, they used to congregate there and talk about music. You just can't imagine Caribbean culture without the music."

Mikei Hall, Senior Art Handling Technician, Tate

● WATCH AND LIME HAPPENED HERE

Trinidad Hill
[Westbourne Park Rd, W2 5UH](#)

"There's a small patch of green close to the corner of Westbourne Park Road and Great Western Road just inside the Brunel Estate. It's nondescript and unremarkable. But each year during Carnival it takes on a special significance. It becomes 'Trinidad Hill', where Trinidadians gather to catch up (lime) and celebrate their biggest cultural export – Carnival. It's a good vantage point to see all who are 'on di road'. I used to go there with my Dad. Our annual tradition started in the mid 70s when he was the Director of Carnival, and is a good insiders tip: Walk the procession route against the flow... You get to see everything twice as fast but even that is slowly!"

Wyn Baptiste, Producer and Director

● PIT STOPS FOR NOSTALGIA HAPPENED HERE

Trinidad Hill
[Westbourne Park Rd, W2 5UH](#)

"At Carnival, every band makes a point of stopping at [Trini Hill](#) (others call it 'Trini Corner') and play for the hardcore supporters who meet there annually, dressed up and waving Trini flags. Our steelband, Nostalgia, would stay up to 10 minutes playing there. We'd only move on when security beckoned us. I started going carnival in a pushchair. By five I did the whole route - from 10am to 10pm - dressed in Nostalgia's costumes with Trini colours and flags. I was always excited on reaching Trini Hill. I first played pan with Nostalgia at 10 and was so proud to play for these supports on the 'Hill' - they'd come out and cheer us every year."

Laila Shah, PhD Student: Pannist with Nostalgia and Mangrove Steelbands

● MAKING FRIENDS WITH MARLEY HAPPENED HERE

The Speakeasy Club
[48 Margaret St, W1W 8SE](#)

"During my last year at secondary school, I had read that Bob Marley was due to tour England for the first time. He was the new voice of Reggae. He had a rebellious stance, lyrically and musically; I was smitten. I decided to go to the club where he was due to play his first gig of the tour. The club was called [The Speakeasy Club](#) on Margaret Street, W1. I arrived in the early afternoon, and after waiting outside for a few hours, he and the band arrived for their sound check. As he approached, I asked him, could I take his picture. 'Yeah, mon!' he replied, 'Com' in'. For whatever reason, Bob took to me and after the soundcheck, he invited me to come on the tour. The rest is history."

Dennis Morris, Photographer

● EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY HAPPENED HERE

Macbeth Centre
[Macbeth St, W6 9JJ](#)

"As a Black child growing up in the UK you are politicised from the start. You find yourself asking the questions who, why, how and what? This spot marked the place I attended Saturday school at five years old. For me, it was a space in which I felt a sense of pride and community within what was otherwise a hostile environment. It was, in many ways, the making of me and many others I am sure of it."

Steve McQueen, Artist and Filmmaker

SOUTH EAST LONDON

● FAMILY AND PLANTAIN HAPPENED HERE

East Street Market
[East St, SE17 1EL](#)

"My childhood years were spent around [East Street](#). East Street is a place of culture and a space where you could get 'our' type of food: salt fish, plantain, yam... The market was where my family and I would get our Caribbean produce from. My aunt's old house was close by. It was where I initially connected with my Caribbean heritage – from the music she would play to the loud conversations in St Lucian Kwéyòl. My primary school was just round the corner, and every two years after the summer holidays, I would bring back a soda CD to school, full of the songs that were just pumping at St Lucia's carnival (not sure who I thought I was but the class enjoyed it). Nearby is the road my grandparents first moved to in the UK. A lot of family members lived in that place just to get started."

Laila St.Vie, Marketing Assistant, Tate

NORTH LONDON

● REBELS AND LAMENTING RASTAFARIS HAPPENED HERE

Keskidee Arts Centre
[Permanently closed](#)
[64 Gifford St, N1 0DP](#)

"[Keskidee Arts Centre](#) was the first Black community arts centre in the UK, off Caledonian Road in Islington. It was run by the Guyanese-born Oscar Abrams, with the African-American Rufus Collins as Artistic Director. It was where Linton Kwesi Johnson developed dub poetry while running the library. Angela Davis spoke, and Bob Marley filmed the video for 'Is This Love?'. I went there often as a teenager, seeing Black theatre productions like Edgar White's 'Lament for Rastafari', Derek Walcott's 'Pantomime' and Lennox Brown's 'Throne in an Autumn Room'. I would eventually become part of this world as a playwright."

Michael McMillan, Writer/Artist

● REPRESENTATION ON THE PAGES HAPPENED HERE

New Beacon Books
[76 Stroud Green Rd, N4 3EN](#)

"[New Beacon Books](#) was the first UK Black bookstore and when I look on the website, I see books that I had as a kid. Being positively represented in books and in media, it really means a lot. The bookstore itself is a sign of authentic representation that's available for the Black community that you don't see too often. After the bookstore announced it was on the brink of closing down due to the pandemic and the lockdowns, the local community and supporters raised over £80,000 to help New Beacon Books survive. They hit their initial target in 24 hours."

Laila St.Vie, Marketing Assistant, Tate

● OPEN ARMS AND FRIENDLY FACES HAPPENED HERE

New Beacon Books
[76 Stroud Green Rd, N4 3EN](#)

"[New Beacon Books](#) on Stroud Green Road, Finsbury Park, was one of a couple of Black bookshops in London. It was run by the dynamic duo John La Rose and his wife Sarah. John was rarely in the shop, as he would be either busy producing a new publication for New Beacon Books, or involved in campaigns for justice like the New Cross Fire of 1981. But through Sarah his spirit was always present, welcoming and warm, and curious about what you were interested in reading, never about the sale of a book. Long live New Beacon Books."

Michael McMillan, Writer/Artist

● SCHOOL, MARRIAGE AND LEMAR HAPPENED HERE

Burgess Park
[Albany Rd, SE5 0AL](#)

"[Burgess Park](#) was kind of the hangout spot for me and my secondary school friends. My first memory of Burgess Park is when they used to do these festivals and they had Lemar performing. My grandparents actually got married in a church that used to be on the park site, and my mum's school used to be there. These monumental moments of my life are all in this one space, and that makes it special for me. My family worked so hard when they came to this country and all of the opportunities I have because they took that step, it means a lot to be connected to that history."

Laila St.Vie, Marketing Assistant, Tate

● OPEN MICS AND ENCOURAGING WORDS HAPPENED HERE

[91 Peckham High St, SE15 5RS](#)

"I'm into music and when I was 15, I went and did an open mic at [91 Peckham High St](#), and there was this guy called Nicholas Okwulu who is the best. He saw me perform, and then let me organise and host my own show. He was a real mentor to me, and this place really pushed me. When you're a teenager, you're a bit angry and you don't really know where you want to go and at 15 he gave me direction. He was one of the first people to say: 'You can do this. And I'm not going to hold your hand every step of the way. And if you fail, go and try it again.'"

Laila St.Vie, Marketing Assistant, Tate

● POST-SWIM CURRY VAN HAPPENED HERE

Curry Stall
[125 Rye Ln, SE15 4ST](#)

"Under sun rays or surrounded by frost, this has been the spot since my teens; hands down the best curry in South London. We used to call it '[Curry van](#)' – I can't remember why because it definitely isn't a van. I have so many memories of sitting on these mix-and-match tables; with a school friend after swimming at Peckham Pulse; with an old lover because they absolutely had to try the chicken and chickpea with rice; with my mum on my way home. Once the sky turned a reddish purple while my friend and I were eating here; she wrote a song about it."

CIL, Sound Artist

● SUMMERS WITH THE CREATURES HAPPENED HERE

Crystal Palace Zoo
[Ledrington Rd, SE19 2BS](#)

"I lived in South London and worked at [Crystal Palace Park Zoo](#). For four summer seasons I worked with an assortment of creatures including Amazon parrots, donkeys, monkeys, vultures, toucans. We had Welsh pit ponies giving pony rides to kids. My whole days seemed to be spent standing, walking or running."

Ingrid Pollard, Artist

● HILLY SLOPES AND MYSTERIES HAPPENED HERE

Alexandra Palace Park
[Alexandra Palace Way, N22 7AY](#)

"[Alexandra Palace Park](#) was the place for family outings when I was a child. It seemed like such a huge area. I loved the boating lake, the woods, sloping hills and panoramic views across London. The locked palace was a mystery. We scattered my sister's ashes on the hilly slopes."

Ingrid Pollard, Artist

NORTH WEST LONDON

● BLUE PLANET GOSSIP HAPPENED HERE

Blue Mountain Peak
[8 Craven Park Rd, NW10 4AB](#)

"For me, food is the link with my family. Whenever I go and visit my Mum or Dad we always have a West Indian meal. A main dish in Jamaica is salt fish with ackee, yam and dumplings. None of these things were easy to find in London, so [Blue Planet](#) became the place West Indians went to get the right food, especially herbs and spices. Even a spice like paprika, when I get it at Blue Planet, it's different to when I get it somewhere else. Blue Planet is also a meeting point. Caribbean people like to talk and engage, and you get all the gossip and all the updates, like 'so-and-so is doing steel pan lessons now.' It's part of my culture and I feel like I'm hanging on to my heritage by sharing it with my children and friends."

Mikei Hall, Senior Art Handling Technician, Tate

WEST LONDON

● SECOND HOMES AND STEELPAN LEGENDS HAPPENED HERE

Maxilla Social Club
[2 Maxilla Walk, W10 6SW](#)

"I joined Nostalgia Steelband in 1993 via its founders and Carnival pioneers, Sterling Betancourt and Russ Henderson, at the renowned [Maxilla Social Club](#) (MSC). Every steelpan legend has played at MSC, and my family grew up there; my daughters, Camille and Louise, first played pan at Carnival in 1994. My youngest daughter, Laila, experienced her first Carnival, aged 2, dressed as a sailor, and led Nostalgia to its first Carnival trophy in 2013, while my granddaughter, Amaya, debuted at just 2 months old. MSC is our second home. It acted as a trauma centre for the 2017 Grenfell disaster and my family played a major role in fundraising for the Grenfell community and in the current COVID-19 vaccination programme."

Professor Haroun Shah, Scientist, Lecturer in Carnival Arts, Pannist

● STAND-IN AUNTIES AND UNCLES HAPPENED HERE

Maxilla Social Club
[2 Maxilla Walk, W10 6SW](#)

"Our [Maxilla Social Club](#) 'aunties' and 'uncles' looked after us as their own while Dad was busy with the band; people like Sterling Betancourt, his brother Herman (now 95), his late wife Alma, pan players Lionel McCalman, 'Doc', and also Pauline, Margaret, and Albert. Now we have the Tabernacle, but Maxilla holds a special place in our hearts. We ate there, got fed by Trini matriarchs, helped out, got told what to do, fell asleep, jammed with other bands after Carnival. It was a place of coming together, acceptance, identity forging, cultural absorption... a safe space for those of us trying to either retain our Caribbean culture, or learn ours. It's a place of cultural education no school can give."

Louise Shah and Camille Shah, Global Humanitarian Worker and Teacher Nostalgia and Mangrove Steelbands

● FIRST SIPS HAPPENED HERE

The Distillery
[186 Portobello Rd, W11 1LA](#)

"I remember the pub on the corner of London's Portobello Road and Blenheim Crescent. As a child I did a paper round, and I would meet my father here after I finished. I had my first alcoholic drink here, a shandy. In the 60s it was referred to by the locals as 'The Piss House Pub'. It's known as [The Distillery](#) now. I photographed it in 1968 and '69."

Charlie Phillips, Photographer

● DREAMS AND HEADRESSES HAPPENED HERE

Westbourne Grove
[Pembroke Villas & Chepstow Place, W2 4XE](#)

"In 2015, I volunteered with a children's Masquerade Band for the Notting Hill Carnival. Just after, my Mum looked at me and said: 'You should make costumes for the Carnival.' I laughed, as I thought this was completely out of reach. Fast-forward to NHC 2016 at this crossing, I paused to catch my breath after months of non-stop work, stood back and looked in awe at the costumes I had made as Lead Designer. The world stood still and I cried tears of unreal joy – I couldn't believe this dream had actually come true."

Levi Naidu-Mitchell, Artist

● 30 YEARS OF SKANKING HAPPENED HERE

Roots and Culture Corner
[Leamington Road Villas, W11 1HS](#)

"This is the spot that we've held at Notting Hill Carnival for over 30 years. It's become known as the '[Roots and Culture Corner](#)', an annual meeting spot for the international reggae community. A place of positivity, vibes and spiritual upliftment."

Mikey Dread, Channel One Sound System

SOUTH WEST LONDON

● PRESSING IDEAS HAPPENED HERE

Black Ink Collective
[Permanently closed](#)
[258 Coldharbour Ln, SW9 8SG](#)

"[Black Ink Collective](#) had a shopfront on Coldharbour Lane, Brixton, and was one of the first Black British publishing presses in the UK providing anthologies and collections of poetry, fiction and plays that young Black children and young people could culturally relate to. They published my first play, 'The School Leaver'. They also held a writers' workshop every Thursday evening, which I religiously attended, taking a No35 bus from Hackney. It was a safe space where I, amongst many others, could get honest and critical feedback about new untested writing from peers who looked like me."

Michael McMillan, Writer/Artist

● SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE HAPPENED HERE

Brixton Market
[Electric Ave, SW9 8JX](#)

"I worked in the market and I enjoyed it very much. The market is where our community was, they could go and talk to people there. It is there for everyone."

Neil Kenlock, Photographer

● AFTER SCHOOL FEASTS HAPPENED HERE

Black & White Cafe
[75 Atlantic Rd, SW9 8PU](#)

"[Black & White Cafe](#) is an experience. People like it in the community and most of my school friends go there. I get fish and other food there, and it just goes! They are really, really good."

Neil Kenlock, Photographer

● FILLING IN THE BLANKS HAPPENED HERE

Black Cultural Archives
[1 Windrush Square, Brixton SW2 1EF](#)

"Discovering the [Black Cultural Archives](#) was really special. I first came to Brixton for a uni project. I was discovering parts of my heritage that formal education had missed – curriculums don't cover Black-Caribbean history. I grew up in Hertfordshire which was very white, so coming to 'Little Jamaica' was huge for me. I decided to go to Windrush Square and write about the Windrush scandal. When I saw the BCA building was next door, I went in and found so much to learn. They're truly dedicated to collecting and preserving Caribbean and African history, as well as providing a space to celebrate Black presence in Britain. They've even collaborated with TFL to reimagine the Tube map with historical Black icons, which is nuts!"

Kadi Diallo, Marketing Officer, Tate

● SECRETS, SORROWS, HIGHS AND LOWS HAPPENED HERE

Westbourne Park
[Great Western Rd, W11 1AB](#)

"For 13 years, I travelled from here almost every day – the bus to School, the tube to College and University, then ultimately several of my jobs thereafter. If a place could speak, I can't imagine what it would utter, it knows my secrets, my sorrows, my highs and my lows. Though I don't pass by half as much as I used to, whenever I do it's like greeting an old friend, knowing that no matter how much time has passed, nothing could ever really change our connection – our memories will always remain."

Levi Naidu-Mitchell, Artist

● LOVE, WARMTH AND GROWTH HAPPENED HERE

Top of Kelfield Gardens
[St Helens Gardens, W10 6LP](#)

"The route to my Grandma's house from mine isn't a long one. Every time I see St Helen's Bakery and sunlight sifting through the Church windows, I always feel like I've stepped into another world; it's like a path opens up with a glowing sign that says: 'You're almost there now.' Knowing that this road has seen me grow, and always leads me to a place of love and warmth, is a comfort I'll carry forever."

Levi Naidu-Mitchell, Artist

● CALYPSO, PLUMBING TIPS AND GELDOLF HAPPENED HERE

The Tabernacle
[34-35 Powis Square, W11 2AY](#)

"[The Tabernacle](#) is kind of a hub... a hive. It's where art meets a community centre. It's got so much history – the Mangrove Nine and the British Black Panthers used to meet there... Darcus Howe used to give addresses... Mick Jagger goes there. But it's also like an old-fashioned Community Centre where you can go and find out: 'Where can I find a good plumber?' It's all-embracing. When I go there, I feel like I'm in a cocoon. You can learn to play steel pan. You hear calypso, reggae, jazz musicians jamming on Tuesday nights. There's a small gallery, there's West Indian food – you know the food is good when West Indian people are eating it. And here's a bit of gossip nobody will give you but me... when they recorded the Band Aid single 'Do They Know It's Christmas' with Bob Geldof - the studio that they recorded that single was a 5 minute walk from the Tabernacle, so they had the after event there. The Tabernacle was seen as the link between art, culture, and society because a lot of musicians that live in the area see it as the place to come together."

Mikei Hall, Senior Art Handling Technician, Tate

● EDUCATION AND CHANGE HAPPENED HERE

[Windrush Square, Brixton SW2 1JQ](#)

"I think [Windrush Square](#) is a very important place. It has the library and a lot of people go there. And the BCA are doing extraordinary things that help people experience things they didn't know. We should know what is going on in our community, especially for the young ones. It's important they learn early. There are good people there, trying to make a change."

Neil Kenlock, Photographer

● BLACK SUNLIGHT HAPPENED HERE

Stuart Hall Library - iniva
[16 John Islip St, SW1P 4JU](#)

"[The Stuart Hall Library](#) at Iniva has been an invaluable resource that has informed my development as a researcher. Stuart Hall's work has been foundational to my understanding of post-colonial identity. The Black Sunlight Collection specifically considered Caribbean thought and intellectualism and the idea of a Black academic wardrobe."

Grace Wales Bonner, Fashion Designer

● DIE HARD ROMANCES HAPPENED HERE

Ritz Cinema
[Brixton Oval, Coldharbour Ln, SW2 1JG](#)

"[The Ritz Cinema](#) has been at the heart of Brixton for as long as I have lived here. I remember going with my girlfriend to see a late night double bill of Die Hard 1 and 2 – the fact that we both enjoyed it proved we were compatible! We've been married for 25 years now."

Hew Locke, Sculptor

EAST LONDON

● THE FIRST LOVER'S ROCK HAPPENED HERE

Four Aces Club
[Permanently closed](#)
[12 Dalston Ln, E8 2LX](#)

"[Four Aces Club](#) – I would pass this legendary club on Dalston Lane, Hackney, virtually every week, though I never raved there. It was where Stevie Wonder, Bob Marley, Jimmy Cliff, Mick Jagger and Bob Dylan hung out, and where Louisa Marks sang the first lovers rock tune 'Caught in a Lie'. With constant raids from the police station a hundred yards away, the owner, Newton Dunbar, was smart and changed it to Club Labyrinth, where The Prodigy premiered and white acid house ravers died. The police raids stopped. The CLR James Library stands there now, but a blue plaque is well overdue."

Michael McMillan, Writer/Artist

LIFE BETWEEN ISLANDS

CARIBBEAN-BRITISH ART 1950s – NOW

OPEN AT TATE BRITAIN UNTIL 3 APRIL 2022.

The exhibition explores the work of artists from the Caribbean who made their home in Britain, alongside other British artists whose work has been influenced and inspired by Caribbean themes and heritage.

Spanning visionary paintings to documentary photography, fashion, film and sculpture, *Life Between Islands* traces the extraordinary breadth and impact of Caribbean British art through the work of over 40 artists.



Charlie Phillips *The Piss House Pub*, 1969 - This was the local name for the pub on the corner of Blenheim Crescent and Portobello Road 1969 © Charlie Phillips / Akehurst Creative Management



Denzil Forrester *Jah Shaka* 1983 Collection Shane Akeroyd, London © Denzil Forrester, courtesy of Stephen Friedman Gallery

● BAUHAUS AND CHANGE HAPPENED HERE

Colvestone Youth Centre
[Permanently closed](#)
[Colvestone Crescent, E8 2LG](#)

"[Colvestone](#) was run by people that had a passion for their various subjects. Artist Alan Clayden, founded and ran the art studio from the early sixties and based it on the Bauhaus Movement. Colvestone taught its many members that there was another way of living. It changed lives. I started painting in Colvestone at the age of 16 in the early seventies. When Alan retired, I took over his position in the studio until its closure (by the government) in 1995."

Denzil Forrester, Artist

● MEETINGS IN THE MELLING POT HAPPENED HERE

Ridley Road Market
[Ridley Rd, E8 2NP](#)

"A market place. A meeting spot. A recreational and eating spot. A rendezvous, a place to blend in, The must-see outfits, the gossip circling. Few places like it, where I can see, So many like him, like her and like me!! Far from my abode, this is an ode, To the one and only, [Ridley Road](#)."

Joel Campbell, Journalist

● SCANDALS AND SATURDAY SOUP HAPPENED HERE

Ridley Road Market
[Ridley Rd, E8 2NP](#)

"On a Saturday I would have to follow my Mum, with trolley in tow, to [Ridley Road Market](#) in Dalston, Hackney. An hour became half the morning, because my Mum would traipse up and down crossing market stallers ('You too t!eef!') about the price of their produce as she tried to save pennies. Then she would meet a relative or fellow Vincentian catching the latest news from back home, about 'who dead and have sugar' (diabetes), and scandal like 'I don't know why she marry him'. Back home she would make delicious Saturday Soup from what she bought."

Michael McMillan, Writer/Artist

● SUMMER HOLIDAYS AND FRANK BRUNO HAPPENED HERE

Rathbone Market
[Barking Rd, E16 1EH](#)

"Summer holidays in Canning Town with Granny were never dull as a young boy. We'd shop every day at [Rathbone Market](#). Sometimes she'd buy, other times it was just to say hi to the Caribbean stallholders. She'd beam with pride every time she told the story of meeting British boxing heavyweight Frank Bruno at the famous Royal Oak pub opposite the market. And while the pub, the Rathbone and my Granny are not here anymore, the love and memories for the area remain forever."

Joel Campbell, Journalist



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