

Charmaine Simpson shares some ideas on how to celebrate Black History Month in your youth group.

TIME TO CELEBRATE

Black History Month is held every October in the UK to promote the knowledge of Black History and the contribution that people of African and Caribbean origin have made to society. The introduction of Black History Month in the UK is usually accredited to Akyaba Addai Sebbo and others working within a strategic partnership, comprising the Greater London Council (GLC), Inner London Education Authority, and the London Strategic Policy Unit – back in 1987.

Many options

There are many wonderful ways of celebrating the achievements of Black people throughout history and here I have put together some ideas of how you can celebrate Black History Month in your youth setting:

- Create a play about key events in Black history and their impact, such as the arrival of Empire Windrush in 1948, Notting Hill Race Riots of 1958, Claudia Jones and the organisation of Britain's first Caribbean Carnival (1958)/ Notting Hill Street Carnival and the Pan African Conference in Manchester. Young people can choose how the event could be dramatized, write the script and conduct the play.
- Create a display of sporting greats such as Walter Tull, Jack Johnson, The Harlem Globe Trotters, Pele, Arthur Ashe, Jesse Owens, Andrew Watson, Arthur Wharton, Althea Gibson, Lewis Hamilton, Serena and Venus Williams, Tiger Woods, and Usain Bolt.
- Create a timeline of various types of African and African-derived music such as African Court Music, Highlife, Work Song, Blues, Gospel, Ragtime, Jazz, Rhythm & Blues, Reggae, Hip Hop, Techno and House music.
- In a music production session, the young people could create a song that combines the styles of pioneering music artists e.g. Scott Joplin, Louis Armstrong, Dizzy Gillespie, Ray Charles, James Brown, Prince Buster, and Toots and the Maytals.
- Research the popular dances associated with the music above and create a production that covers these styles from the Cake Walk, Lindy Hop, Tap Dance, Breakdance, Disco, Charleston, the Electric Slide, Moonwalk etc.
- Attend a Black History Walk around your local area and visit museums like the British Museum [go ▶](#) and the Science Museum [go ▶](#) in London and the International Slavery Museum in Liverpool. [go ▶](#)
- Organise film screenings with discussions in your youth settings of films, such as Sankofa, 500 Years Later and Maafa. The British Film Institute Screenonline pages on Black British Film are a good resource to utilise. [go ▶](#)

These are just a few ideas on how you can celebrate Black History Month in your youth setting. But, you don't have to limit yourself to the month of October – Black History should be celebrated all year round!

Charmaine Simpson is Education and Training Admin Officer with UK Youth and the Chief Executive Officer of Black History Studies Limited, who specialise in the teaching of Black History and Black Studies.

[go ▶](#) to the Black History Month website.
[contact ▶](#) Charmaine Simpson, if you have any questions or if you would like to tell us how you celebrated Black History Month.

