

BIRTH OF THE NHS

1900-TODAY



LIFE IN THE NHS

“BLACK NIGHTINGALES”



PRE-NHS STORIES

AFRICAN AND AFRO-CARIBBEAN NURSES IN BRITISH HEALTHCARE



HARMFUL STEREOTYPES



OUT OF HOURS

TODAY

PURPOSE

WINDRUSH - relating to the people who emigrated from the Caribbean to Britain on the ship the Empire Windrush in 1948.

Stories of the Windrush generation overlook the fact that black women have played crucial roles in British nursing, from way before the idea of the NHS was even thought about. Whilst migrant women from West Africa and the Caribbean have dedicated their lives to the British nation, they continue to experience discrimination from within the NHS walls today. We must reframe our history of British healthcare, in order to create a more inclusive working environment for all nurses. The experiences of these women are diverse, and their individual stories must be appreciated.

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'Black Nightingales' - A term of endearment, which became used in city hospitals like Nottingham Women's Hospital in the late 1950s.

TIMELINE



1940

1911 - [CONGO/NETHERLANDS] - Lulu Coote begins nurse training in Ashton under Lyne

1941 - [NIGERIA] Nurse Adenrele Ademola trains at Guy's Hospital as midwife during WWII

1948 - NHS created, British Nationality Act

1950

1950 - [NIGERIA] - Kofoworola Abeni Pratt qualifies as a SRN, among the first black nurses in the NHS

1960

1962 - Commonwealth Immigrants Act, Race Relations Act, Rivers of Blood speech by Enoch Powell

1970

-1979 - [NIGERIA] - Elizabeth Nneka Anionwu became the first UK sickle cell and Thalassemia nurse specialist, [NIGERIA] - Kofoworola Abeni Pratt awarded Honorary Fellowship of the Royal College of Nursing (RCN)

1980

-1981 - British Nationality Act (Led to an increase in number of registered black nurses)

-1983 - Work permits for nurses abolished prohibiting further entry of overseas nurses to train in Britain

1990

-1990 - The Ghana Nurses Association (UK) formed

-1998 - Nigerian Nurses Charitable Association (UK) formed

2010

-2014 - [GHANA] - Cecilia Anim as first black president of Royal College of Nursing

-2015 - Workforce Race Equality Standard (WRES) introduced

2020

-2020 - Outbreak of covid-19. disproportionate number of BAME background nurses impacted.

-2022 - Largest strike in RCN history to date

PRE - NHS

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Whilst stories of black nurses from the Windrush generation are important, the myth that this was the first time that commonwealth nurses set foot on English soil has led people to exclude them from having a British identity.

A look into the lives of black nurses who migrated before the creation of the NHS, and the docking of the ship Empire Windrush, demonstrates that black nurses are part of British healthcare history.

Four different stories have been explored here:

Lulu Coote - a mixed race half Congolese, half Dutch woman, began nurse education at the District Infirmary in Manchester in 1911. She then worked as a nurse in Sierra Leone and other countries on the eve of the first World War, before returning to England.



1911



1920 ->

The West African Students Union (WASU) - set up by Nigerian Ladipo Solanke and Sierra Leonean Herbert Bankole-Bright, as a support group for the small minority of African migrants living in London in the 1920s and 30s. Due to hostile housing discrimination, WASU established a series of hostels for new arrivals, one of them being Princess Adenrele Ademola.

Princess Adenrele Ademola - a daughter of an important chief from Northern Nigeria, who trained as a nurse in London at Guy's hospital. She finished her training in 1941. A propaganda film 'Nurse Ademola' was made about her, to promote support in the colonies during the Second World War. She returned to Nigeria in 1948.



1941

NOTE! Class differences largely shaped the opportunities for African and Afro-Caribbean migrant nurses to study in Britain during this period. The majority came from wealthy backgrounds.

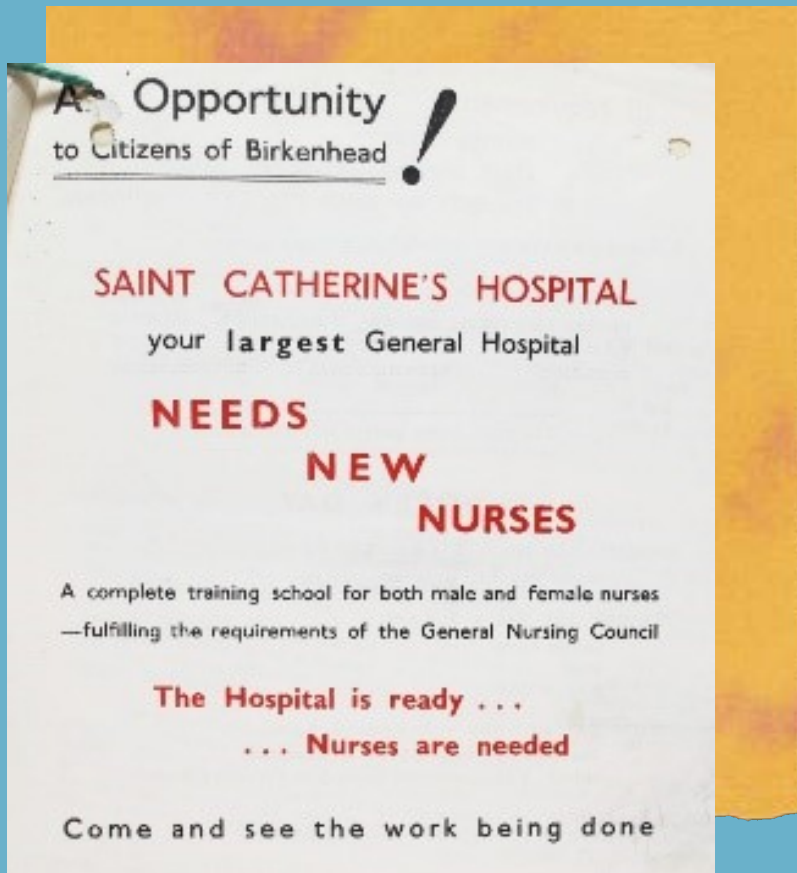
1946



Kofoworola Pratt - a young Nigerian woman who began studying nursing at the Nightingale School at St Thomas' Hospital in 1946, and qualified as a State Registered Nurse (SRN) in 1950. She was among the first black nurses to work for the NHS.

BIRTH OF THE NHS

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Leaflet aimed at recruiting nurses at Saint Catherine's Hospital, Birkenhead, 1952

It is not a coincidence that the creation of the NHS in 1948 coincided with the passing of the 1948 British Nationality Act.

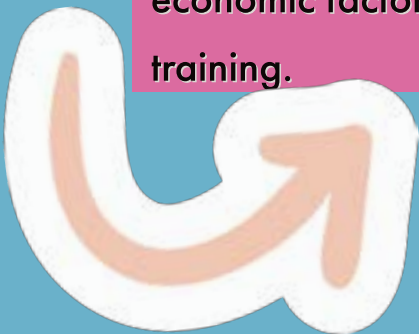
The NHS was in desperate need for staffing. After a failed national campaign to attract nurses, the Ministries of Health and Labour teamed up with the Colonial Office, the General Nursing Council and the Royal College of Nursing to create recruitment drives to attract candidates from the colonies.

Local selection committees were set up in 16 British colonies. From 1955, there were various schemes to help migrants with travel fares. Most, however, had to fund their own journey without help.

By 1969, the shortages in staff had begun to slow down.

NOTE:

Reasons for migration were varied, and not just dependent on economic factors. Not all migrant women remained in Britain after their training.



"It was the first time for me going out in the world...That's one of the things I liked about it. Everything was so exciting"

Muriel, Barbadian-born, 1955

"I came here pursuing a nursing career"

Zena, Jamaican-born, BBC documentary 'Black Nurses' 2016

"You get the fever that you wanted to go...after Elaine went, then I wanted to go!"
Daphne, Jamaican-born, 1958

Nurses School at Sekondi, Ghana, 1956



BRAIN DRAIN - the mass recruitment of African and Afro-Caribbean nurses had a damaging impact on the healthcare systems in their countries where they migrated from.

HARMFUL STEREOTYPES

False media stereotypes about African and Afro-Caribbean migrant women continue to shape the ways in which they are treated today.

The sexist and racist imagery excludes migrant women from visions of British society. The imagery negatively impacts their treatment in the NHS.

-Daily Express, 25 February 1971



Whilst nursing imagery is more positive than the 'hypersexual breeder', it was not until the late 1950s that Black migrant nurses were seen alongside white nurses in media images.

They are also generally depicted in less important roles to white English nurses.

the
'hypersexual
breeder':

Migrant women are continually described as a burden on the NHS, through representations of them as excessively fertile and filling the maternal and social services.

"Many of the women arrive in this country at various stages of pregnancy, and often live on National Assistance"

-Nursing Times, 5th December 1958

the 'angry, Black woman':

Has its roots from nineteenth-century American racism. The trope is pervasive in UK media representations.



-BBC News, 11 September 2018

This misogynistic trope influences black women's fears about seeking NHS support

"I was worried about being stereotyped as an angry Black woman"

Patricia Anthony, on her experience of maternity care in Manchester, 2020

Not all NHS recruits were made equal. Many black nurses were trained as State Enrolled Nurses (SEN), whilst many English and Irish nurses were trained as State Registered Nurses (SRN).

There was an expectation that African and Afro-Caribbean nurses could not cope the same as English nurses. The SEN training was abolished in the 1980s.

"I was supposed to graduate from bedpans and start doing nice jobs. There was an English girl in my set and she was doing these things, but I was still...[allocated to] the bedpans"

Lynette, age 78, for BBC Black Nurses Documentary, 2016

Many women made lasting friendships whilst working for the NHS:

"I'm walking down with my suitcase... and there's this [English] girl who came up to me... [now years later] Linda is like my sister"

Beverley, age 65, for BBC Black Nurses Documentary, 2016

LIFE IN THE NHS

Not all of migrant women were SEN nurses:



Dame Elizabeth Nneka Anionwu is from a second-generation Nigerian migrant family. She became the first sickle-cell and thalassemia nurse specialist in 1979



Racism from patients:

Allyson Williams MBE, for BBC Black Nurses Documentary, 2016

"They would slap your hand away, and say...'your black is going to rub off'"

The collective history of these women, is of achievement in spite of adversity.



Jacqueline Dunkley-Bent and Arona Ahmed (right), The Mirror, 4 May 2015

Jacqueline Dunkley-Bent, was appointed as The Most Senior Midwife in England in 2019, which was a new role created by the NHS. She has risen to media fame for assisting recent royal births.

FOSTERING

“put the welfare of the children above your studies or job”

Poor migrants were encouraged to put their children into foster care with white working-class families.

In 1968, there were 5,000 children enrolled into this scheme.

SOCIAL LIFE



“We would party all night and return to the Nurses Home about 6am, shower and then go on duty for 7am.”

-Allyson Williams MBE, Heart of the Nation Exhibition 2020

OUT OF HOURS

HOUSING DISCRIMINATION



-The Daily Telegraph, 29 June 1964

African and Afro-Caribbean nurses faced housing discrimination, as well as being prevented from entering certain professions

RACIAL VIOLENCE



-Jean Gay, for BBC Black Nurses Documentary, 2016

“I stopped in the shop and bought a portion of fish and chips, and there was this group of Teddy Boys...I remember being pushed and kicked and so on”

TODAY

Whilst there are signs of progress:

2015 -

The Workforce Race Equality Standard (WRES) first introduced, to ensure equal opportunities for ethnic minority groups

The #BlackLivesMatter movement has centered focus of studies onto Black women

Improvements from within the NHS are needed:

HAIR RACISM:



Some black nurses continue to be discriminated against by their superiors, for the way they tie their hair. A form of cultural racism.

Following Brexit, there has been a revival of xenophobia and racism

During the Covid-19 pandemic, 71% of nurses who died were from ethnic minority backgrounds



Young Historians Project Mural at Royal United Hospital, Bath, 2021

**EXTRA
INFO**

(All free to access online)

-For NHS at 70 website:

<https://NHS70.org.uk>

-For the Young Historians Project:

<https://younghistoriansproject.org>

-For Heart of the Nation exhibition:

<https://heartofthenation.migrationmuseum.org/>

Thank you for reading, for more information you access the websites provided above.