

THE MAGAZINE WRITTEN BY YOUNG BLACK UK AUTHORS

unesung

KIDSZINE

ISSUE 3 MARCH 2026



CELEBRATING
BLACK
LITERATURE
IN THE
UK

MEET
17
INCREDIBLE
LITERATURE
STARS

Adjani Salmon ★ Caleb Femi ★ Daniella Blechner ★
Davina Hamilton ★ Gabs Range ★ Garfield Robinson ★
Imani Ulaini ★ Kamal Lewis ★ Linton Kwesi Johnson ★
Margaret Busby ★ Nadine White ★ Okezie Morro ★
Robin Walker ★ Samuel Benta ★ Sophia Leonie ★
The Black Writers Guild ★ Tony Fairweather

Young Authors
Picture Special with
the Late Great
Publisher and
Activist Baba
Eric Huntley



Young Lit Stars

Europe's first and largest publisher of Black children's books written by Black authors (ages 6-17).



Young Authors



Books Published



WHO ARE WE?

A family-run Black business dedicated to amplifying the voices of Black children and young people through authorship. Our independent publishing house publishes powerful, authentic stories written by Black children for all children — centring joy, culture, boundless imagination.

LIT STARS FLAGSHIP PROJECTS

- The annual **Children's Black Book Fair UK®** (1,500+ attendees)
- The Great British Spell-Off** – Nationwide spelling bee competition
- UNSUNG** – UK's first online KidsZine by young Black authors
[click HERE](#) to read our first issue
- Children's Black Book Directory UK®**
- Children's Black Book Week UK®**

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WHO WE'VE WORKED WITH



Let's change the world one book at a time



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younglitstars@gmail.com

FROM THE EDITOR

Hi, I'm Lauryn-Rose

I am so excited about this edition of *UNSUNG* because it's a Literature Special and I love books.

It's the National Year of Reading, and the Department for Education has partnered with The Literacy Trust under the theme 'Go All In'. The Trust runs several projects to reconnect people of all ages to reading for pleasure – so there's no excuse not to get involved.

Since we were last in touch, so much has happened. For a start, many of our young writers picked up awards – congratulations to Sarah Kittoe BCyA and Romeo Bremmer BCyA, who, amongst many of their other achievements, were awarded the British Citizen Youth Award medal in the House of Lords and can now use the letters BCyA after their names. Nariyah-Rose Redley won the True Little Heroes Scribe of the Year Award, and Zanna Orunsolu picked up first place in the Fiero Code Arctic Adventure Coding Contest, a global competition running across Europe, the USA and New Zealand. One of my proudest moments last year was the honour of being recognised in the Houses of Parliament as one of the 100 Global Child Prodigies of 2025.

There were sad times, too. In January, we said goodbye to literature Legend Papa Eric Huntley, who died at the age of 96. *UNSUNG* features a picture special to celebrate meeting this great man last year at his home in

Ealing and at The Children's Black Book Fair UK.

Turning to this Literature Special issue – it was very difficult to decide which writers to include because there are so many *UNSUNG* writers doing amazing work – clearly, at some point, we'll need to do a Part 2.

Our Young Authors settled on Black *UNSUNG* talent linked to a wide range of literature. You'll meet authors, poets, publishers, storytellers, booksellers, television scriptwriters and journalists; a playwright and an illustrator; an event organiser, an advocacy group, and a historian, plus learn more about the UK's first Black bookshop and publisher – New Beacon Books.

We are honoured and excited by what we have produced, and hope you love it too.

Feel free to email your comments and suggestions.

Love, Lauryn-Rose, Aged 13

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On the Cover: 13 year old author of 5 books, Sarah Kittoe BCyA inside New Beacon Bookshop. Photographer: Paul McKenzie



THE WRITE STUFF

Our Young Authors posing with some of the UK's Leading Black Literature Talent



Romeo Bremmer, Zion Thomas, Ilhora-Lee Louison, Jahmari Maxwell, Zanna Orunsolu and Lauryn-Rose Teixeira with publisher Eric Huntley



Sarah Kittoe and EastEnders star and author Rudolph Walker CBE



Israel Allen with *My Little Black Book* author Jane Oremosu



Nariyah-Rose with 'ultrapreneur' and author Julian Hall



Romeo Bremmer (when he was 10 years old) with Akala, author of the *Sunday Times* best-seller *Natives*



Israel Allen with author and financial advisor Emmanuel Asuquo



Lauryn-Rose Teixeira and Joylen Teixeira with Rastamouse author and creator Michael DeSouza

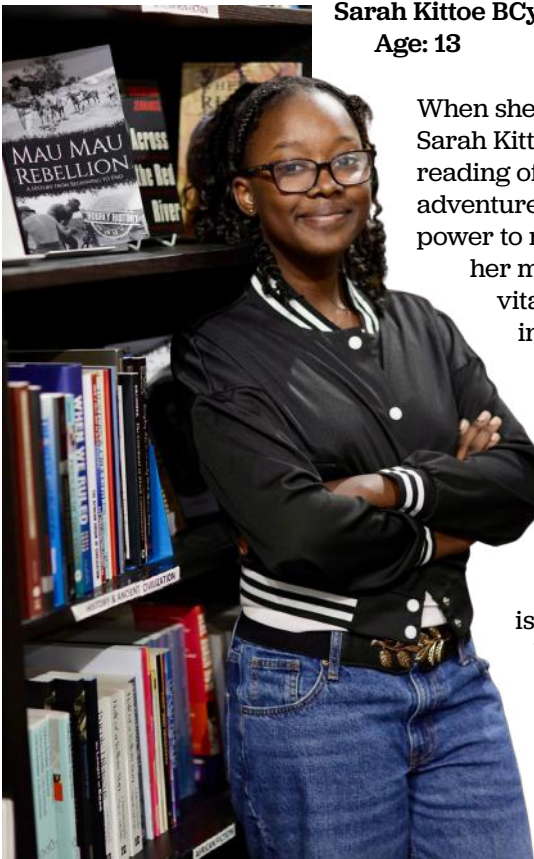


Romeo Bremmer with writer and creator of *JoJo and Gran Gran* Laura Henry-Allain MBE

WE ARE THE YOUNG WRITERS

Aged eight to 17, our writers are all accomplished authors who together have published 26 books.

ACCOMPLISHED ★ INNOVATIVE ★ CONFIDENT



Sarah Kittoe BCyA
Age: 13

When she was younger, Sarah Kittoe discovered that reading offered an escape into adventure. Writing gave her the power to reshape reality. Today, her mission is simple yet vital: "To bridge the gap in representation and ensure every child sees themselves as the hero of their own story, and to raise funds to eradicate or reduce vulnerabilities." She is the author of five books: *The Friendship Club*, *Lindsey and the Blue Fox 1 & 2*, *Ama and the Lost Keys*, and *Sarah Kittoe's Colouring Book*. Beyond

the page, Sarah is the visionary behind the SM Kittoe Foundation, an initiative dedicated to four pillars: Educate, Empower, Grow, and Sustain communities. For Sarah, storytelling is more than a hobby; it is a tool to dismantle inequality. Through her books and philanthropy, she aims to provide children worldwide with the courage to dream and the platform to lead.

Achievements

- British Citizen Youth Award Medallist (BCyA), British Citizen Awards, 2025
- Kiwanis Youth Impact Award, United Kingdom, 2025
- Round Table Empowering Change Award, Global Youth Awards, 2025
- Special Recognition Award, Royal Global Awards, 2024

FOLLOW SARAH ON HER SOCIALS

-  www.sarahkittoe.co.uk
-  [sarahkittoebooks](https://www.instagram.com/sarahkittoebooks)
-  [Sarah Kittoe BCyA](https://www.facebook.com/SarahKittoeBCyA)

Israel Allen

Age: 13

Israel enjoys writing, drawing and basketball. He started writing his book at eight years old after trialling business ideas such as edible slime and art products. He bought a drawing tablet (XP-Pen) for Christmas and used it to create his characters and practise illustrating. He then did a course with Ultra Education and realised he could create other brands connected to his book, like mugs and

bookmarks.

Israel's favourite author is Ashley Hickson-Lovence, and his aim is to encourage young people to read more.

Achievement

Young Entrepreneur of the Year, True Little Hero, 2023

FOLLOW ISRAEL ON HIS SOCIALS

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-  [@animalfusions.st](https://www.tiktok.com/@animalfusions.st)



Jahmari Maxwell

Age: 12

Jahmari is from East London and enjoys writing and sport. He plays football and basketball and wants to play professional football when he is older. His favourite book is *Monster Hunters*. Jahmari wrote three profiles - John La Rose, Linford Christie, and Alford Gardner - published in the book *Hey, Black Boy! Windrush Special* when he was 10.



Lauryn-Rose Teixeira

Age: 13

Lauryn-Rose is a multi-award-winning author, philanthropist, and Global Child Prodigy (2025). She made history as the first and youngest Afro-Portuguese author in the UK to publish a multilingual children's book with her debut title, *Lauryn That's Me: The Journey of a Powerful African Girl*. The book celebrates Black identity, self-love, Afro-Portuguese heritage, and single-parent families. Her second book is *Lauryn's Kitchen* (April 2026). Lauryn is a leading advocate for representation in children's literature and media. She is a World Afro Hair Ambassador and holds a Guinness World Record for her role in helping to organise the world's largest online cultural awareness class. Her impact has been recognised internationally, through book donations, workshops, and global outreach. Lauryn is the education and culture advisor on the Youth Council in Kensington and Chelsea

and continues to inspire children worldwide to embrace their identity, culture, and voice.

Achievements

Potential Unlocked Awards - Young Author (Highly Commended), 2025
Writing and Poetry Global Child Prodigy, Global Child Prodigy Awards, 2025
Young Hero, BBC Make a Difference Awards, 2025
Young Activist of the Year, Young Ealing Foundation, 2025
Young Leader (Creative Achievement), Kensington & Chelsea Council, 2025

FOLLOW LAURYN ON HER SOCIALS



Zanna Orunsolu

Age: 10

Zanna is an award-winning author, coder, media personality, and creative changemaker whose work spans literature, technology and broadcasting. She is known for blending creativity with purpose, using storytelling and digital media to inspire children to read, learn, and see themselves as capable creators.

Zanna began reading and writing from an early age. From the age of six, she has contributed short stories, poems, plays, and comics to published collections with young writers. At seven, she published her debut book, *Zanna's Amazing Shakespeare. As I Like It*, which is now preserved at the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust Museum.

At nine, she published *My First*

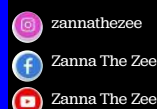
Coding Adventure for ages 3-5, and is currently developing a 6-9 edition and an interactive ebook for both. She also produces creative content across two YouTube channels. Beyond publishing, Zanna is deeply committed to impact, donating both of her books to eight primary school libraries and audiobook editions to Great Ormond Street Hospital, alongside fundraising for Cancer Research UK and Marie Curie.

Achievements

1st Place Overall Winner, National Young Radio Presenter, 2025
1st Place Fiero Code Arctic Adventure Coding Contest (Europe, USA & NZ), 2025
1st Place Code Ninjas International Summer Game Jam (UK, USA & Canada), 2025
1st Place, Code Ninjas Enfield Local

Summer Game Jam, 2025
2nd Place, Young Herald National Songwriting Competition, 2025
2nd Runner-Up, KS2 National Spelling Bee, 2025
Highly Commended Winner, Shakespeare UK Week Competition, 2023

FOLLOW ZANNA ON HER SOCIALS



Joylen Teixeira

Age: 10

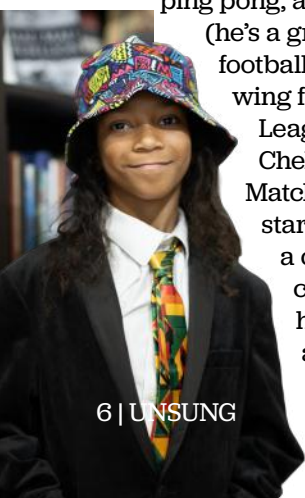
Joylen loves sport, fashion, reading and writing. His favourite activities are ping pong, athletics, Taekwondo (he's a green belt) and football. He plays on the wing for the Junior Premier League football clubs Chelsea, Playmaker and Matchday. In 2023, he started JC Fashion Star, a children's clothing company that makes hats, bags, bodysuits and jackets from

African textiles. His debut writing piece about 'Racism in Football' is featured in the anthology *Our Stories Our World*, which was published in March 2026.

Achievements

Young Creative, True Little Hero Awards, 2024
Player of the Tournament, PSD Football Tournament, 2025
Silver Position, Interclub Championships, 2025

FOLLOW JOYLEN ON HER SOCIALS



Courtney Jackson

Age: 14

Courtney loves reading, athletics and art, and wants to be a teacher in the future. She has been attending Westside Young Leaders Academy in Harlesden from the age of eight and enjoys cooking and travelling. Courtney's favourite book is Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Her debut in published writing was a story about her Windrush grandad, featured in the book *Our Roots*.



Nariyah-Rose Redley

Age: 9

Nariyah-Rose is a published author whose love for reading and writing comes from the way books take her on exciting adventures and help her learn new words. Her favourite book is *The Worst Witch* by Jill Murphy, and she is currently enjoying reading the full collection. From the age of five, Nariyah expressed her thoughts and imagination through drawing. She began writing stories at the age of seven

and, to date, has published two books. *Dancing With Daddy's Memory*, her first book, tells an intimate story about the loss of her dad to show that memories last forever even when loved ones are no longer here. Her latest book, *Oh No! How Life Has Changed*, explores life changes through reflection and journaling. Nariyah-Rose has been featured in magazines and on radio stations promoting her books and inspiring others through her story.

Achievements:

Scribe of the Year Winner, True Little Hero Award, 2025
Samaritan of the Year Finalist, True Little Hero Award, 2025
Finalist, West London Business Awards, 2025

FOLLOW NARIYAH-ROSE ON HER SOCIALS

 nariyah.rose_



Romeo Bremmer BCyA

Age: 17

Romeo Bremmer BCyA is an award-winning author of nine books. He is passionate about addressing representation in children's books and is a Director of LIT Stars C.I.C, which publishes Black books written by Black children and stages the annual Children's Black Book Fair UK. Romeo is an author trainer, speaker and the chief fundraiser for a school in Ghana, Africa. He began writing at the age of seven, and at 14, was nominated alongside authors Professor David Olusoga

OBE, Akala and Candice Braithwaite for his outstanding contribution to literature. In 2026, he is launching the Children's Black Book Directory UK on World Book Day. Romeo's work has been featured in *The Voice*, *London Daily News*, *Hackney Gazette* and *Keep the Faith*, and on ITV News, BBC Radio London and BBC's *Songs of Praise*.

Achievements

BCyA Medal Winner, British Citizen Youth Awards, 2025
London and South East Young Market Trader of the Year

Category and Overall winner, National Market Trader Federation, 2025
Young Person of Influence, *Keep the Faith*, 2025
Inspirational Young Person of the Year, Hackney Youth Awards, 2025
Inspirational Leader of the Year, True Little Hero Awards, 2024
Hackney Representative, UK Youth Parliament, 2024

FOLLOW ROMEO ON HIS SOCIALS

 @romeobremmer

 Romeo Bremmer BCyA



Amahria Dublin

Age: 10

Amahria lives in North London and is home-schooled. She is a creative who is very passionate about arts and crafts, and enjoys singing, cooking, manga drawings and editing videos. As a recently baptised Jehovah's Witness, one of her goals is to become a Bethelite, which is a volunteer for the organisation's global Bible education work. Amahria's vision is to support the work by creating films with special effects. Last year she wrote her first book, *Montserrat ABC*, which introduces readers to the Caribbean island where her grandmother was born.



Oluwatimilehin Adegbulugbe

Age: 12

Oluwatimilehin, also known as Timi, loves books, anime and sport. In his free time, he likes to work on his YouTube channel, Pizza Gaming, where he uploads Roblox and dance videos. He has written a book about a Roblox adventure and made his own webpage using Visual Studio Code. Timi attends boarding school where he has a wide range of friends from different countries, including Russia, Spain, China and Ukraine. Timi is currently working on an adventure book about boarding school, due out later this year. He enjoys David Baddiel's illustrated books and is currently reading *The Person Controller*.



Sheldon Barrett

Age: 11

Sheldon is home-schooled and loves reading, listening to and playing music. He plays piano, steel pans and the djembe drums. He also enjoys tennis, swimming, playing Minecraft, and watching nature documentaries. He wrote his book, *What's the Time Sheldon?*, which is a day in his home-schooled life, when he was eight.

FOLLOW SHELDON ON HIS SOCIALS

 iamsheldonbarrett

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MEET SOME OF THE UK'S AMAZING BLACK WRITING TALENT



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Literature Legend - 60 years
Specialists In African And
Caribbean Literature

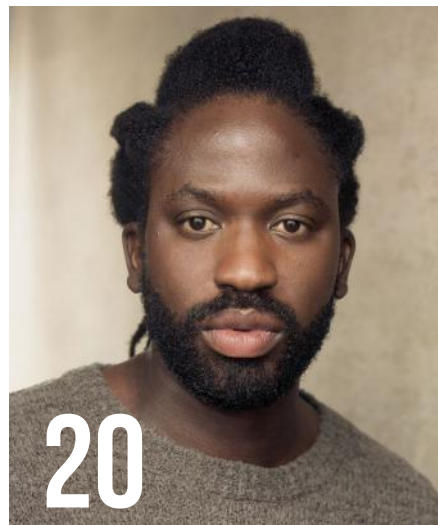
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Black Writers Guild
An organisation that highlights and promotes past,
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NEW BEACON BOOKS

60 YEARS OF BEING MORE THAN A BOOKSHOP

LITERATURE
1966-2026
LEGEND

“

New Beacon Books started bookselling at the same time as publishing and made history, literature and picture books available to adults and children in Britain.

”

A group of young authors with Director Michael La Rose outside New Beacon Books

Photographer Paul McKenzie



Hello, I'm Jahmari. Two years ago, I wrote a profile in the book *Hey, Black Boy!* Windrush Special about a man called John LaRose. In 1966, he founded one of the first Black bookshops in the UK - New Beacon Books. This year is the 60th anniversary of the bookshop, which was named after a group of Caribbean cultural activists in 1930's Trinidad & Tobago who validated Caribbean literature, art, popular music and folk culture in a magazine called The Beacon.

The bookshop began as a box of books taken to meetings. From there, it evolved into a front room with a wall of shelves, then a whole room of shelves with an office. This was across three different residential homes before they eventually secured a physical bookstore in 1975. There is a deep love for New Beacon Books within the UK Black community. It has supported the bookshop by raising £11,248 in 2017 and donating over £84,000 post-pandemic. Mr John LaRose's son Michael is one of the directors.

Jahmari: Tell me a bit about New Beacon Books and how the business started.

Michael: New Beacon Books was an idea my father John La Rose had when he was in exile in Venezuela. It was to have a publishing house to make important out-of-print fiction and non-fiction books available to new generations. He started it in 1966 with his partner, Sarah White. It started bookselling at the same time as publishing and made books with history, important ideas, literature and picture books available to adults and children in Britain. The books were about the Caribbean, Asia, Africa, Black Britain and Afro-America.

Jahmari: Tell me a bit about your personal book journey that ended with you as a director of New Beacon Books?

Michael: My integration into New Beacon was first as a helper and packer, then as a worker with different responsibilities in the publishing house and bookshop. It was a natural next step to be appointed as one of the directors with that knowledge and experience. My then



BLACK ★ LITERATURE



This year New Beacon Books celebrates 60 years of publishing and bookselling.

“

Liberation begins in the imagination.

John La Rose

”

partner, Janice Durham, also became a director as she had volunteered for years in the bookshop and had become the bookshop manager.

Jahmari: What would you say or do to encourage a young person to read?

Michael: The culture has moved away from reading books to reading limited information on a screen. We are in the business of Information, Education and Knowledge. We think it is crucial that young people can read, write and do maths at an adequate level. They need these skills as tools for their own self-education, historical research and struggles, and to develop critical thinking. Art, poetry, literature and storytelling are important cultural and spiritual expressions for all people. At New Beacon, we believe that art fused with political action strengthens both important activities. Reading gives young people the ability to learn, access knowledge and gain an understanding of the world we live in. This can be from books where the information is deeper

and more reliable, but can also be gained from many other media as well. Reading is the best way to access information.

Jahmari: Tell me about your most memorable moment with New Beacon Books.

Michael: New Beacon Books, Bogle-L'Ouverture Publications and Race Today Publications organised the International Book Fair of Radical Black and Third World Books between 1982 and 1995 in London, Manchester, Bradford/Leeds and Glasgow. It was truly a meeting of the continents with writers, activists, poets, performers and publishers coming from all over the world for the three days of the book fair. There was also the Book Fair Festival running through the whole week in the evenings with screenings, performances and forums discussing literature, art and politics. These book fairs were magnificent and the general public attended in numbers with an anticipatory buzz at the beginning of each day.

Jahmari: What or who do you think has had the biggest impact on the UK Black community when it comes to Black literature?

Michael: It is hard to tell. In Post-war Britain, there was a movement of diverse independent Black publishers and Black book stores

nationally during an active period in the Black community. The early pioneers, Allison & Busby, Bogle-L'Ouverture,

Black Ink, and many others, produced important literary books supported by the Black community. The subjects of the books were mainly post-independence. Many of the authors were born in Africa, Asia and the Caribbean. Writers like Sam Selvon, Buchi Emecheta, Roy Heath, George Lamming, ER Braithwaite, Linton Kwesi Johnson and Andrew Salkey began to write about Britain. Then came many writers born in Britain like Norman Smith, Ruel White, Fred D'Aguiar, Benjamin Zephaniah, Victor Headley, Andrea Levy, Malorie Blackman, Bernardine Evaristo, Zadie Smith and many, many more. There are waves of new Black writing

in Britain currently, but the dominant publishers are mainstream or their Black imprints.

Jahmari: If money were no object, what would New Beacon Books look like?

Michael: A multi-media palace of knowledge and information. With areas of book and digital information storage. We would also have an auditorium for

"If money was no object New Beacon Books would be a multi-media palace of knowledge and information with areas of book and digital information storage."

performances and screenings with meeting rooms for discussions, tutorials and panels in the days and evenings. The palace would include a café area doubling as a dining area in the

evenings.

By Jahmari Maxwell, aged 12



Read Jahmari Maxwell's profile on Read Jahmari Maxwell's profile on John La Rose in the book Hey, Black Boy! Windrush Special, page 25. [Link HERE](#)



Michael L. Rose, son of Activist and New Beacon Books co-founder John La Rose

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ROBIN WALKER

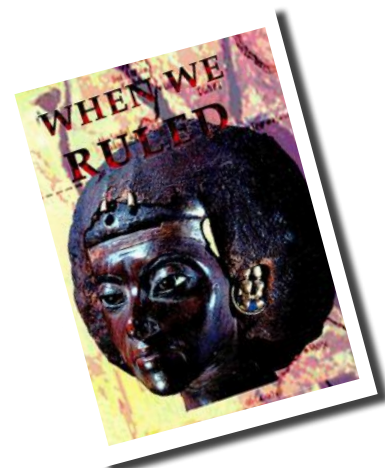
**Author Publisher Educator
Speaker Historian**

at the London School of Economics and Political Science. He has lectured in adult education, taught university short courses, and chaired conferences in Black History, Egyptology, African World Studies, and Entrepreneurship. In 2022, he co-founded the online adult education joint venture, The Black Secret, which teaches Black History and Wealth Education to adults.

Mr Robin Walker has also appeared on the Power List of Britain's Most Influential Black People.

Thank you, Mr Walker, for your valued contribution to UK Black Literature.

**By Romeo Bremmer,
aged 17**



I met Mr Robin Walker two years ago when I was invited to the Croydon Supplementary Education Project (CSEP) to give a talk. He was a friendly, quiet and unassuming worker who, during the break, treated my mum and me to some Caribbean food.

"That's the Black History Man!" my mum whispered excitedly after he left the room.

"Who?" I replied.

"Robin Walker. Him!" She pointed in the direction of the door. "He's the Don! A heavyweight when it comes to Black History. He's written a gazillion books and he's just bought us rice and peas!"

I googled him when I got home and jumped at the chance to write this profile giving honour to a UK Literature

Legend, author of seminal books like the classic *When We Ruled: The Ancient and Mediaeval History of Black Civilisations*, and the bestseller *The Rise and Fall of Black Wall Street*.

Mr Walker has achieved international recognition as an author with books covering every major theme in Black History and African Heritage - Ancient, Mediaeval and Modern.

"Mr Robin Walker has achieved international recognition as an author with books covering every major theme in Black History and African Heritage."

He has also educated thousands of people through his personal development Black History and African

Studies programmes for the past 25 years, empowering others to learn, master and build on their heritage to create their own successes.

He was a former teacher and studied African World Studies and Economics

KNOWLEDGEABLE ★ PASSIONATE ★ HONEST

Connect with Mr Walker

-  www.theblackhistoryman.com
-  <https://www.instagram.com/theblacksecret3/>
-  <https://www.facebook.com/robin.walker.1276>
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WAYNE MARSHALL

Wayne Marshall, the UK's first charting R&B artist, unveils a powerful reimagining of Sam Cooke's Civil Rights anthem, 'A Change Is Gonna Come.' If you are a part of the Afro-Caribbean diaspora in the UK and felt the weight of systemic racism, his version of this timeless classic is for you.

**"WHILE THE FIGHT ISN'T OVER, CHANGE IS POSSIBLE
WHEN WE COLLABORATE."**

Wayne Marshall

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In a bid to make the release accessible to all, Wayne Marshall offers the single and its remixes on a 'Pay What You Want' basis via his official website.

A CHANGE *Is Gonna Come*

Wayne Marshall



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CALEB FEMI

Poet Filmmaker

Caleb Femi is an award-winning Nigerian-British poet, filmmaker, and photographer whose work explores identity, community, and growing up in modern Britain.

Raised in South London, he uses creative storytelling to reflect young people, particularly those from Black British communities.

Caleb taught English at a secondary school in Tottenham from 2014 to 2016, and after leaving, he was appointed London's first Young People's Laureate. In this role, he encouraged young Londoners to express themselves through poetry and helped bring youth voices into important conversations about culture and society. He is widely regarded as an influential emerging

voice in

British poetry, with his work featured on the AQA English

Literature GCSE syllabus. In 2020, Caleb released *Poor*, a collection of poetry and photography focusing on the experiences of young Black boys in South London, particularly in Peckham. He paints a picture of life on a housing

estate and uses powerful language and strong imagery to explore themes

like friendship, hardship, resilience, and hope. In 2021, he won the Forward Prize for Best First Collection for its impact and originality.

Caleb Femi is recognised as a multidisciplinary artist. Beyond writing, he combines poetry with photography and film to tell stories of urban life and youth experiences in new and creative ways. By turning personal and community experiences into art, he

inspires young people to believe that their voices matter.

Caleb has directed films for major broadcasters such as the BBC and Channel 4.

By Amahria Dublin, aged 10.

Connect with Caleb



<https://www.calebfemi.com>



@caleb.femi



@CalebFemi

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RAW ★ HONEST ★ REFLECTIVE

Nadine White

Journalist Author Publisher Filmmaker Speaker



Nadine grew up in Brixton, south London and graduated from University College London with a degree in English Literature. She then completed the National Council for the Training of Journalists accredited training at News Associates in London. She worked with *HuffPost* and *The Voice newspaper* before joining *The Independent newspaper* in 2021 as the UK's first dedicated Race Correspondent. She launched *the Race Report*, the first newsletter on race from a national title, which grew its subscribers base by over 300% from its inception. In 2024, *the Race Report* moved from fortnightly to weekly due to popular demand.

Reporting about issues relating to race, and amplifying Black perspectives in particular, was part and parcel of why Nadine became a journalist. Her work focuses on current affairs, race and social justice. She has a reputation as someone unafraid to speak truth to power, while standing firmly with the communities most affected. The Centre for Investigative Journalism said that her work "...placed perspectives from BAME communities at the forefront of the national news agenda."

Nadine's persistence within journalism came at a cost: she has faced relentless online abuse, the Conservative government excluded her from key briefings - including one about the widely discredited Sewell



“I see journalism as a service. I try to use my writing to amplify the perspectives of other people - particularly those at the fringe of society whose views are too often overlooked.”

race report - and she was disinvented from Windrush events after high-level intervention because of her reporting. However, in 2020, Nadine won the Paulette Wilson Windrush Award for her work in highlighting the Windrush scandal.

Nadine has won more than 16 journalism awards and made history in 2020 as the first Black reporter to be shortlisted for the Paul Foot Award. She has also been named on the Forbes 30 Under 30 list.

Her impact has been celebrated by the BBC, *The Guardian* and *Glamour* magazine,

which have highlighted her as one of Britain's modern Black changemakers. In 2025, Nadine was recognised internationally as one of the 40 Under 40 Most Influential People of African Descent in media and culture.

Nadine wrote and directed the documentary *Barrel Children: The Families Windrush Left Behind* (2023) through Brixton Heights Media, her own production company. It explored the long-term impact of migration on Caribbean families and debuted among the UK's top 25 films at the box office.

In 2025, after almost five years at *The Independent*, Nadine left to focus on long-form storytelling, advocacy and projects that spotlight Black lives and experiences - particularly in Britain. She launched *Black Current News*, a platform dedicated to reporting the stories that matter to Britain's Black communities and beyond.

By Romeo Bremmer, aged 17



Connect with Nadine

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ADJANI

Screen Writer Filmmaker Director

Adjani Salmon is an emerging, motivated, award-winning writer, filmmaker and director born in London, but raised in Jamaica. He decided he wanted to be a director when he was 22 years old, but he first started making videos when he was just 13.

His cousin Henry had come to Jamaica to make films. Adjani would regularly watch him transform video clips into stories and later started helping his cousin at work. This made Adjani want to learn how to tell stories visually.

During the summer of 2011, Adjani and Henry made a funny comedy series and shared a new video of this every week online. At first, he did not have much equipment or experience, but he kept practising and learning from his mistakes. Because Adjani worked so hard, he was offered a job as an assistant editor with a leading film director, even though he was still learning how to edit videos.

During his time in Jamaica, Adjani worked across a range of media, including the reality

television programme *Mission Catwalk*, music videos and commercials. From 2011 to 2013, he also ran his own production company, Blip Productions, where he directed adverts, public service announcements, and short films.

In 2013, he decided to move back to the United Kingdom to study film at the Met Film School where he could



SALMON

BRILLIANT ★ FUNNY ★ TRUTHFUL

develop the skills he needed to succeed in the industry. At film school, he made seven short films and learned how to improve his storytelling and develop his creative voice.

He did a Masters in Film Directing and, with friends from film school, started a production company, 4Quarter Films. Through this company, he created *Dreaming Whilst Black*, a comedy-drama series, which he starred in. He took a big risk, using his mother's mortgage deposit to fund the project in 2017, promising her that he would make her proud and that her investment would bring rewards. The series became an instant hit with followers on his YouTube channel and led to a pilot on BBC3, a Royal Television Society Award, and a British Academy of Film and Television Awards (BAFTA) for Emerging Talent in 2022.

Adjani Salmon's work reflects a Jamaican-British perspective. It is based

on his personal experience and cultural identity, exploring themes of race, class and the challenges of being a creative. He uses humour to tell powerful and meaningful stories and believes that hard work and practice are the best ways to become a better storyteller.

By Amahria Dublin, aged 10



“

Adjani took the big risk and used his mother's mortgage deposit to fund the project, promising her that he would make her proud and that her investment would bring rewards.

”

Connect with Adjani

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SOPHIA LEONIE

Playwright Screenwriter Author Journalist

“

Mum reading to me and my brother at bedtime, helped foster a deep love of reading and an early understanding of the power of stories, which shaped my life.

”



EMPATHETIC ★ STRONG

Hello, my name is Nariyah-Rose Redley, and I am nine years old. I'm excited to write about Sophia Leonie, a writer and actress who has written plays, a chapter in an anthology, magazine articles and, as a screenwriter, for BBC television's *Holby City*.

Tell me a bit about your childhood linked to books.

Our house was always filled with bookcases and books were everywhere. My mum is never without a book, even now! She would read to my brother and me at bedtime, and once we could read independently, she set aside 30 minutes each evening for us to read on our own. These routines helped foster a deep love of reading and an early understanding of the power of stories, which shaped my life.

Tell me a bit about your writing journey.

I've always been a writer. I've kept a journal since I was about eight, and as a teenager, I worked as a journalist for a teen magazine called *Exposure*. Later, after graduating from university, I interned at one of the first online magazines, *ebonyonline.net*, writing arts and theatre reviews for the Black community in London, but I soon learnt that working for free (which was expected at the time) wasn't sustainable

for me - I didn't come from money, and needed to support myself. So, I decided to do a PGCE and trained as an English and media teacher.

Alongside teaching, I continued writing - reviewing theatre for Stagey Lady, running a blog, and eventually freelancing. This led to writing for *gal-dem*, a magazine for women and non-binary people of colour - where I covered social commentary and politics, and interviewed artists like Chilli from TLC. I've since written for *Metro*, *The Independent*, and other publications.

You are also an actress and have written magazine articles and plays. How difficult is it to write a play, and how different is it from other types of writing?

Playwriting, to me, is the most fun. It's active storytelling with almost no rules about genre or format.

When I

started, I'd take my articles and turn them into characters' monologues, then build scenes around them. Playwriting is also very collaborative - once you have a dramaturg, a director, actors, and sometimes a publisher, the story changes and you lose a bit of control as you get to the final product. But seeing it all



G-MINDED ★ CREATIVE

66

come together and become something new is part of the joy of being a playwright.

Tell me about writing for the BBC's *Holby City*.

I was selected for *Holby City*'s shadow scheme for new writers. It involved working with a mentor, attending story conferences, responding to notes and submitting four drafts in total - so taking part in the full scriptwriting process. The final script was read by the commissioning team, and I was invited to write an episode for broadcast. I absolutely loved writing for *Holby City*.

Tell me a bit about *Millennium Girls*, the play you wrote that has been published in a book.

Millennium Girls is a fun coming-of-age play set on the brink of the new millennium. It explores girlhood, friendship, identity, and consent. The main character is a mixed-race girl who moves from Brighton to London and joins a new secondary school, where suddenly she must learn how to fit in. It's funny, honest and heartbreaking at times.

Encouraging a child to read should start young. First, it's about giving a child the experience of being read to, which is such a beautiful, wonderful thing that all children deserve.

You are also a qualified teacher. Do you think my generation (Alpha) appreciates books?

I see loads of children of your generation enjoying books, so yes, of course! I do think that these days screens can be a distraction, but they can be for adults too. It's super important that we don't rely too heavily on screens or social media for our only entertainment or escapism, and it's hard because it is addictive - but overuse reduces our attention span and weakens our ability to concentrate and, crucially, to imagine.

By Nariyah-Rose. Redley, aged 9



Connect with Sophia



<https://www.instagram.com/mssophialeonie/>

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Favourite Author?

I love Chimamanda Adichie and Bernardine Evaristo. As a teenager, I loved Rosa Guy's books.

Favourite Book?

Tough one! Growing up, my favourite was *The Friends* by Rosa Guy. More recently, my favourite has been *Girl, Woman, Other* by Bernardine Evaristo. A close runner-up is *Homegoing* by Yaa Gyasi.

What are you reading now?

Dominoes by Phoebe Mackintosh. It was actually a play first, then rewritten as a novel.

GARFIELD ROBINSON

Professional Bookseller Publisher Black Author Strategist
Special Projects Manager

My name is Zanna and I am 10 years old. I'm writing about Jamaican-born Mr Garfield Robinson. He is also known as Gary and is the Senior Accounts & Special Projects Manager at Voice Media Group. He is also a professional bookseller and has been doing this important job for over two decades.

Were your parents/family members book lovers?

My mother and many of my aunts, uncles and cousins were either teachers or worked in some kind of educational establishment, so I knew books from the start. As I got older, I would help my mum mark the children's homework books that she took home. When it was time for me to move on to tertiary education, my mother suggested I train as a teacher. I did not have to think twice about it.



Tell me a bit about your book journey.

As a teacher, when I got paid, the first place I visited was a bookshop. Over the years, I bought tons of books. When I came to the UK in 2001, a teacher asked me to find cultural heritage material, and the calling for books reignited. But this time it was to sell them.

What would you say or do to encourage a child to read?

Reading is the best way to gain information firsthand, rather than depending on someone else to tell you what something means. Even reading simple instructions teaches us how to carry out tasks and helps us learn how to navigate through life from childhood to adulthood.

Tell me a bit about your company, Promoting Our Heritage, and its importance.

When I started selling books, I thought of it as making people aware of my cultural heritage. The name connected

because I started selling Jamaican books, then books from the wider Caribbean and Africa, truly representing the richness of African and Caribbean heritage.

Why should people read your book series, *Keepers of the Flame: Saluting 100 Black Authors?*

In early 2022, I wanted to celebrate my 20th anniversary of selling books. I decided to create a book to *salute the authors and keepers of the flame* because of their burning desire to preserve our African and Caribbean heritage by writing and publishing books. In three and a half years, I have produced three volumes, each covering the backstories of Black authors in the UK: how they

write their books and the stories they share, and how we can learn and even be inspired to write our own books. I plan to reach volume five during 2026. One of the greatest benefits of reading my books is to be inspired by the journeys behind the stories, showing that becoming an author is not an unreachable goal.

Why do you think representation in Black books is important?

As members of the UK community - where we live, work and take care of our families - our stories matter.

They need to be shared and preserved in books.

By Zanna Orunsolu, aged 10



“When I was growing up, I did not know of any children’s authors. Now I know quite a few, which is proof that children do value and appreciate books.”

Favourite Author?

The Hon. Louise Bennett, Jamaican folklorist.

Favourite Book?

Jamaica Labrish by The Hon. Louise Bennett.

What are you reading now?

The Wonderful Adventures of Mrs Seacole in Many Lands by Mary Seacole.



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17 year old award-winning author of 9 books, Romeo Bremmer is excited to launch the FREE Children's Black Book Directory UK.



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MARGARET BUSBY

Publisher Editor **Writer**

PIONEERING ★ TRAILBLAZER ★ CAMPAIGNER

Margaret Yvonne Busby CBE, also known as Nana Akua Ackon, is a pioneering Ghanaian-born British publisher, editor, writer and broadcaster.

She co-founded Allison & Busby in 1967 and became Britain's youngest and first Black woman publisher.

She has spent five decades promoting diverse voices, publishing authors like Buchi Emecheta, C.L.R. James, Chester Himes, George Lamming, Andrew Salkey and Michael Horowitz. Margaret broke barriers as a Black woman in a male-dominated field and is considered a cultural figure due to her activism and diversity in publishing. Independent UK publishing house Myriad Publishers has recognised Margaret Busby not only as a major cultural figure in Britain but

"Margaret Busby broke barriers as a Black woman in a male-dominated field, broadening the British literary landscape"

also around the world. She is a founding member of the Greater Access to Publishing



(GAP) organisation, campaigning for Black representation in the industry.

In 2017, Margaret was a recipient of the Benson Medal from the Royal Society of Literature, in 2020 was named one of the '100 Great Black Britons' and in 2023 was made President of English PEN.

Margaret edited anthologies like *Daughters of Africa* (1992) and *New Daughters of Africa* (2019). These groundbreaking anthologies showcased women writers of African descent.

In 2021, she was awarded a CBE (Commander of the Order of the British Empire) in the Queen's Birthday Honours for services to publishing and received an honorary Doctor of Literature from Royal Holloway, University of London.

In 2023, Oxford Brookes University awarded Margaret an honorary Doctor of Letters, and in June 2025 the University of Johannesburg recognised her with an



honorary doctorate for her dedication to critical African scholarship and publishing.

Margaret Busby is cousin to another trailblazer - Moira Stuart, the first African-Caribbean female newsreader to appear on British television.

By Lauryn-Rose Teixeira, aged 13.

Connect with Margaret



<https://www.linkedin.com/in/margaret-busby-754a1227>

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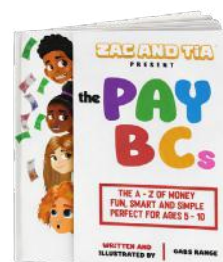
GABS RANGE

Creative Director Author Illustrator Publisher Animator



Gabs Range is a creative director from Hackney. He is a middle child of six and was often left to his own devices, which allowed his imagination and creativity to go into overdrive. He loved to draw and make things from whatever he could find in the house. He remembers using newspaper and PVA glue to build people and buildings and then painting them. His favourite book back then was *Where the Wild Things Are* by Maurice Sendak. The story is about a boy who imagines his bedroom transforming into a forest and makes friends with the creatures he meets.

Gabs' first book, released in 2024, is currently his most popular title. Zac and Tia and the Amazing Toy Shop follows two children who discover a toy shop that allows them to





borrow magical toys. But these toys must be returned on time, or there are consequences. Through their experience, Zac and Tia learn the importance of responsibility, a theme that directly connects to financial literacy – an essential life skill that many people are not introduced to at a young age. The motivation behind the book was to educate children about financial responsibility while engaging and entertaining them.

For the design, Gabs was tempted to feature a diverse group of kids to create a broader appeal, but discovered that there were not many Black

children represented in books. This inspired him to create Zac and Tia as central characters.

Finance isn't usually presented as fun, even though it's really important. His latest book, *The PayBCs*, teaches financial terms from A to Z through short poems, with illustrations that help bring everything to life in an enjoyable and approachable way.

Gabs believes the best tool for connecting young people, no matter what direction technology goes in, is books. Books will always be well-respected and having that as the foundation of the Zac and Tia brand was non-negotiable.

By Israel Allen, aged 13

“The goal is simple: to introduce Zac and Tia and their family to the world as a positive representation of Black families, while encouraging healthy dynamics and conversations within the community.”

Favourite Author?

James Baldwin

Favourite illustrator?

Vashti Harrison

Favourite Book?

The 48 Laws of Power, Robert Greene

What are you reading now?

The Bible, James to be precise

Zac and Tia and the Amazing Toy Shop, Zac and Tia and the Secret Time Machine, and Zac and Tia Presents The PayBCs
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THE ZAC AND TIA YOUTUBE CHANNEL



TONY FAIRWEATHER

Author Event Manager Social Historian

Tony Fairweather is Black Literature Gold. His impact and influence earned him the title Godfather of Black Literature in the UK.

In 1989, Tony set up *The Write Thing* and organised a series of book events where people could meet a Black author from England, America and the Caribbean. This had never been done before in the UK. Before this, he had been promoting a book called *Disappearing Acts*, which was written by American author Terry McMillian. His work introduced her to a large audience of UK Black readers.

Her publishing company was so bowled over by Tony's influence and ability to reach black UK book lovers, that

he was given the responsibility to organise Terry McMillian's first UK appearance.

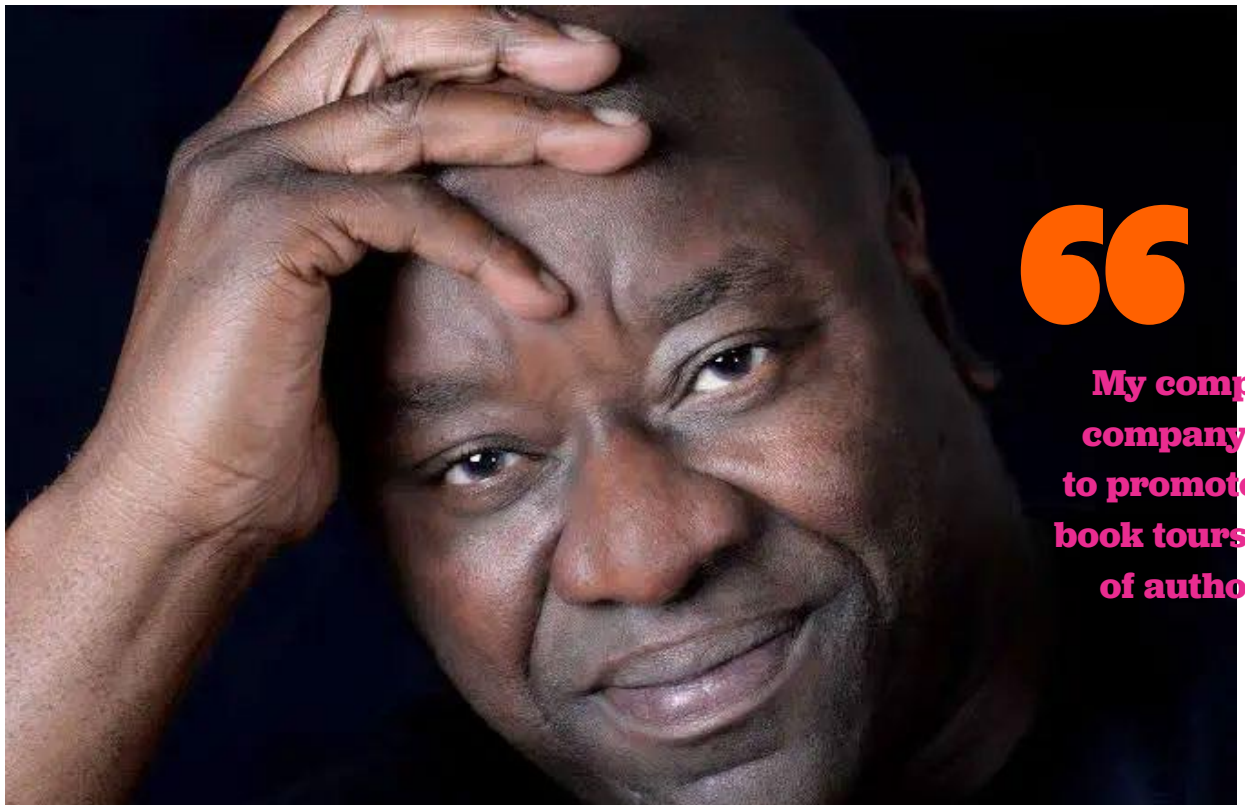
He is also the mastermind behind the first book launches of singer Nina Simone and former Prime Minister of Jamaica

Mr Michael Norman Manley ON OM OCC PC, editor of *USA Essence* magazine, Susan L Taylor's book event, and the last UK show of Dr Maya Angelou.

Tony was born in Clapham, South London, and grew up as part of a large family. He describes his childhood as a happy one. His Jamaican parents were book lovers, and all the children in his family had to make sure they read regularly.

His mother was his book inspiration -

LITERATURE
37 YEARS
LEGEND FOR



“

My company, company I set to promote Black book tours in the of authors th

HAPPY ★ AMBITIOUS ★ HIGHLY MOTIVATED

FAIRWEATHER



Tony remembers that she read daily, and he joined her, starting with his school books and moving quickly onto cultural ones.

He opened Narada, a shop and art gallery in Brixton selling arts, crafts and books, before going on to work for *The Voice newspaper*, where he set up the biggest Black book club in the UK.

Today, Tony is the founder and curator of the Windrush Collection, a touring

exhibition of artefacts associated with the Windrush generation - the group of Caribbean people who changed British culture through their influential music, food, clothes, fashion and lifestyle.

Tony is the author of *Twenty-Eight Pounds Ten Shillings*, a story of the journey on the HMT Windrush in 1948. He was always fascinated by how Caribbean people got the £28 10s (in today's money, over £800) just after the war, when many families were on very low incomes. He interviewed 15 elders who came to England between 1940 and 1950,

capturing their stories in written form for the first time.

If money was no object to spread the love of reading and books, he would stage a massive international book show connecting authors, publishers and promoters from the Caribbean, Africa, the USA and the UK.

When it comes to literature, he believes the biggest impact on the UK Black community comes from Margaret Busby, New Beacon and Headstart Books.

By Oluwatimilehin (Timi) Adegbulugbe, Aged 12



The Write Thing, was an events
up in 1989 that was established
ck authors. It went on to promote
the UK and USA for a large number
at included Alice Walker, Terry
McMillan.

”

Connect with Tony



www.hoperoadpublishing.com



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A photograph of a young Black man, Kemal Lewis, smiling and clapping his hands. He is wearing a dark blue long-sleeved shirt and maroon trousers. He is standing in front of a modern, multi-story building with many windows. The image is partially obscured by text on the right side.

KAMIA

Young Author

My name is Sheldon, and I am home-schooled and I am 11 years old. I am profiling Kemal Lewis, a new and talented author to look out for. Kemal grew up on a council estate in West London. As a student, he was inspired by publishing legends Jessica and Eric Huntley after they visited his secondary school to teach Black history. Kemal was a daydreamer growing up; he couldn't stay focused because he was busy imagining other worlds. He began writing comic strips, scripts for YouTube, stories and poems. In 2025, he finally wrote his debut novel.

Q: What or who inspired your connection with books?

A: Stories from movies, shows and games. Knowing that everything we watch and play has a script written for it, it encouraged me to go right to the source and learn, but most importantly, to get involved in the writing.

Q: What would you say or do to encourage a young person to read?

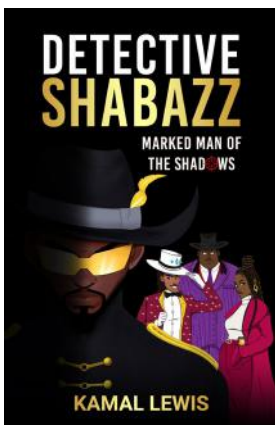
A: There is a lot of knowledge contained in books that isn't found in movies or other media. It helps to strengthen your brain, increases your vocabulary, engages your imagination and can improve your memory. The benefits in reading will help you a lot for the rest of your life.

Q: Tell us a bit about your debut novel, Detective Shabazz: Marked Man of the Shadows.

KAMAL LEWIS

A: Detective Shabazz is a private investigator born into a powerful family who own a rare gold that has been hunted by elite secret societies for centuries. When his family-owned priceless 'Queen Lunda' golden artefact is stolen by the brutal Purplesuits gang, led by the cold-blooded Deuces Goliath, Shabazz is pulled from the safety of the shadows into a deadly game of hunt or be hunted. The book is the perfect fusion between action, adventure, comedy, political drama and best of all, mystery.

Q: What or who do you think has had the biggest impact on the Black community



when it comes to Black literature?

A: I think our writing in Rap, singing and other versions of songs have had the biggest impact as it incorporates storytelling and music that is relatable to us. It is known globally and is very impactful in breaking walls and barriers to others outside our culture.

By Sheldon Barrett, aged 13



Favourite Author?

Walter Mosely.

Favourite Book?

The Man Who Lived Underground

by Richard Wright

What are you reading now?

Contagious: Why Things Catch on

by Jonah Berger

“There is a lot of knowledge contained in books that isn't found in movies or other media. The benefits in reading will help you a lot for the rest of your life.”



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DANIELLA BLECHNER

Book Journey Mentor Author Publisher

66

Daniella built a platform that offered not just publishing services and a team of dedicated editors, typesetters, illustrators and designers, but mentoring, community, and empowerment.

99



DEDICATED ★ PASSIONATE ★ CREATIVE

Daniella Blechner is my Mentor and has been with me on my book journey. She has encouraged, supported and walked with me as my publisher and helped me to market my books, giving my family and me the knowledge and confidence to succeed.

As a child, Daniella Blechner adored reading books and writing her own stories. She loved making people laugh and would tell stories to her sisters to help them sleep at night. She had a deep fascination with animals and adventure, so many of her stories featured both. At seven years old, she could easily whizz through six or seven books during the summer holidays. However, growing up in the 1980s, she rarely saw characters who looked like her in the books she read, and that absence stayed with her.

Her book journey began with a deep love for storytelling and a desire to create impact through words. Danni always loved reading and writing, but when she decided to publish her own book, she found the process overwhelming and filled with barriers. She eventually did this in 2014, but the journey wasn't easy. There was a lack of clear guidance, but through that experience, she learned not just about publishing, but also about the power of owning your voice and your story. That is what led her to create Conscious Dreams Publishing because she wanted to support other aspiring authors, especially those from



underrepresented backgrounds.

She built a platform that offered not just publishing services and a team of dedicated editors, typesetters, illustrators and designers, but mentoring, community, and empowerment because she believes stories change lives, and everyone deserves the tools and support to tell theirs.

Her most recent book is *9 Days of Piper Snow*. A picture book about friendship, loss, and the importance of cherishing special

“

Every year, I run an event called Black Authors on the Rise, which celebrates Black authors and helps amplify their voices and stories.

I'm passionate about making sure children from all backgrounds and cultures feel seen, celebrated, and positively represented in books.

”

memories. The story was inspired by a real white pigeon she named Piper, who landed on her windowsill ten minutes after she placed a photo of her late father there. The book helps children talk about difficult emotions such as grief, especially since they are often left out of those conversations.

Daniella believes that supporting Black authors is crucial. Practically, that support means buying books by Black writers and attending events that amplify Black voices and stories. She believes that stories have the power to connect, and that is what drives everything she does.

By Sarah Kittoe, aged 13



Sarah with her mentor Daniella

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What are you reading now?

"I'm currently reading three books. Yes, it's possible! Haha. I've just started reading *The Manual for Good Wives* by Lola Jaye, a story set in Sierra Leone and England about a woman learning to be brave, find her voice, and choose her own future. *Where You Go, I Will Go* by Christine Fonthes, a warm story set in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and England, about family, love, and staying connected no matter where life takes you. I am also re-reading my middle grade contemporary fantasy novel *Sadie the Great Album Cover Heartist*. I wrote this back in 2009 and have been nurturing it for over 11 years. I'm on what feels like my 100th edit. I think it's time I published this!"



Black Writers Guild and Jasimar Senior

THE BLACK WRITERS GUILD

Representing the Black Publishing Community in the UK

A Writers Guild is a professional organisation that represents writers across various media and negotiates with production companies, studios, and broadcasters to establish minimum standards for pay, benefits, and working conditions.

It is surprising to think that, before the global pandemic, a Black Writers Guild did not exist. However, following the brutal killing of George Floyd

in May 2020, many large organisations - including publishers - took advantage of that moment to highlight their Black authors and release statements of support for the Black communities, who have been campaigning for equality for decades.

In June 2020, a group of Black

writers led by Black Writers Guild Founders - author Nels Abbey, publisher Sharmaine Lovegrove and journalists Afua Hirsch and Symeon Brown - wrote

to the leading publishing companies in the UK to demanding action on systemic inequalities and the chronic underrepresentation of Black authors,

Criteria for Membership
If you identify as an established or emerging Black writer, contact the BWG about Membership.
hello@theblackwritersguild.com



The Black Writers Guild was formed with the aims of holding the industry to account and improving Britain's literary cultures. It represents professional and emerging British writers of Black African and Black African-Caribbean heritage. Its purpose is to create a sustainable, profitable, fair and equal ecosystem for Black literary talent in British publishing.

By Romeo Bremmer,
aged 17

commissioners and senior decision-makers. The open letter - co-signed by 100 Black writers that included Bernardine Evaristo, Candice Carty-Williams, Professor David Olusoga OBE, Jeffrey Boakye, Professor Kehinde Andrews, Kwame Kwei-

Armah OBE, Malorie Blackman, Professor Paul Gilroy and Sir Lenny Henry - also called for support for The Black Writers Guild and grassroots Black literary communities such as booksellers and book clubs.



Three of the Black Writers Guild founders, Nels Abbey, Sharmaine Lovegrove and Symeon Brown

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BWG Conference 2022 and 2023 photograph by
Josimar Senior



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IMANI ULAINI

Author Publisher Academic



“

It's vital for children who are richly melanin blessed (Black) to see themselves positively reflected in characters, histories and stories. It builds racial pride and racial self-esteem.

”

CREATIVE ★ FUN ★ A

I am Joylen Teixeira, and I am 10 years old. My interview is with the author and publisher of the *The Uncle and Auntie Man Dem Series*, Imani Ulaini, who was born in Reading, Berkshire, and now lives in London. Growing up, her mum made sure there were always books in her house. The only book she saw her dad read was the Bible.

Q: What or who inspired your connection with books

A: There was a Puffin book club at my primary school and my mum gave me money to buy books every month. We also had plenty of story time at school and I loved to hear stories being read on TV programmes such as Jackanory.

Q: Tell me a bit about your book journey.

A: I went to Sunday school as a child and was immersed in Bible stories. My primary school teachers were very creative and engaging, making reading fun. At secondary school, I excelled in English literature and language and I loved poetry.

Q: Tell us a bit about your books.

A: 'The Uncle and Auntie Man Dem Series' not only centre people of African heritage, they also centre the culture too. To me, that's important as you may have richly melanated people featured in a story, but they are presented as completely European, with their African heritage and culture being totally erased. My books focus on the principles of community building, honouring one another, sharing and caring, but they are written with humour and not judgement. The characters were inspired by my parents' generation, those who came to the UK from the Caribbean post World

War 2. The most iconic character in the series, Auntie Vex Up, was inspired by my late Aunt, who was always vex. LOL!

Q: You wrote the book *The Tale of Rasta Claus and Santa Claus*? Why?

A: Writing *The Tale of Rasta Claus and Santa Claus* enabled me to re-Africanise the story of the Nativity, which has been white-washed and colonised for far too long. It also allowed me to reveal the murky history of White Western Europe's damaging dominance over the world, resulting in a dangerously wicked polarisation of rich and poor, with Black and Brown people being colonised and erased, and White Westerners damaging the



ADVENTUROUS

earth in order to live in overdeveloped luxury.

Q: You are a PhD student and have a Master's in the History of Africa and the African Diaspora. Do you think it is important to have Black characters and Black stories in children's books, and why?

A: Marcus Garvey stated, "a people without knowledge of themselves is like a tree without roots". In my opinion, it's vital for children who are richly melanin blessed (Black) to see themselves positively reflected in characters, histories and stories. It builds racial pride and racial self-esteem. I intentionally used the word 'positive' as, up until fairly recently, when Black characters were

portrayed in stories, it was often in a negative light.

Q: What's next?

A: I also hope to feature a few more stories about Auntie Vex Up as she's become a bit of an icon. I'd also like to finally get around to writing my first academic book based on the true story of an African teenager living in London during the 1760s, whose solo resistance to enslavement played a part in setting the ball rolling towards the legal abolition of chattel enslavement of African people.

Q: Who do you think has had the biggest impact on the Black community when it comes to Black literature?

A: I'm aware that *When We Ruled: The Ancient and Mediaeval History of Black Civilisations*, written by community historian Robin

Walker, has had a profound impact on the global Black community.

By Joylen Teixeira, aged 10



Favourite Author?

Too many to name.

Favourite Book?

The Bible.

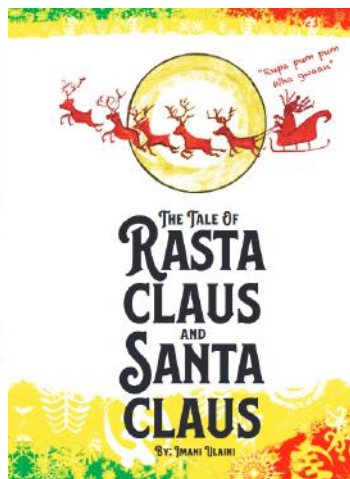
What are you reading now?

The Secret of Secrets by Dan Brown.

Auntie Vex Up



Uncle Boosy



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SAMUEL BENTA

Screenwriter Author Actor Director

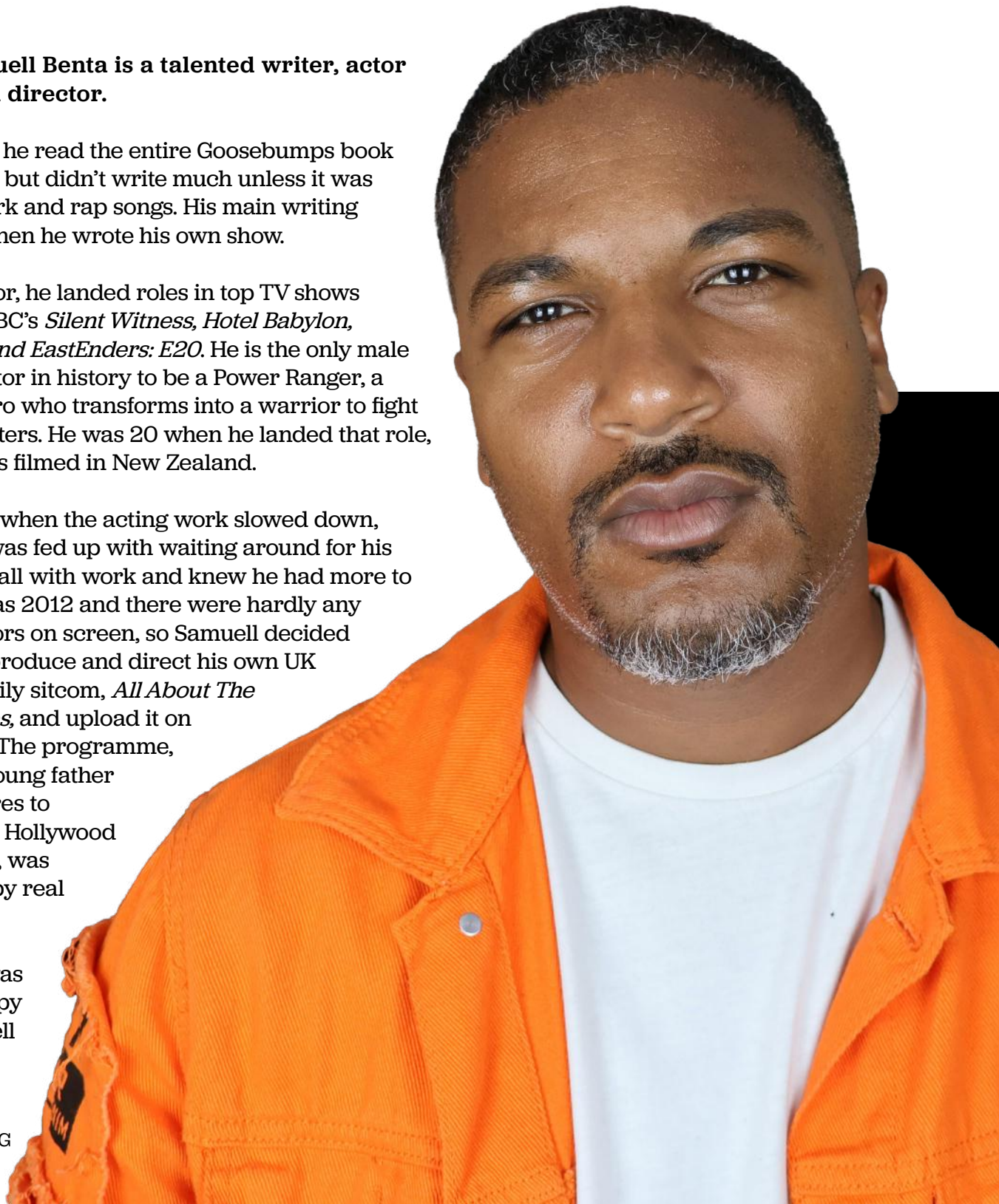
Samuell Benta is a talented writer, actor and director.

At school, he read the entire Goosebumps book collection but didn't write much unless it was schoolwork and rap songs. His main writing started when he wrote his own show.

As an actor, he landed roles in top TV shows such as BBC's *Silent Witness*, *Hotel Babylon*, *Doctors* and *EastEnders: E20*. He is the only male British actor in history to be a Power Ranger, a young hero who transforms into a warrior to fight evil monsters. He was 20 when he landed that role, which was filmed in New Zealand.

However, when the acting work slowed down, Samuel was fed up with waiting around for his agent to call with work and knew he had more to offer. It was 2012 and there were hardly any Black actors on screen, so Samuel decided to write, produce and direct his own UK Black family sitcom, *All About The McKenzies*, and upload it on YouTube. The programme, about a young father who aspires to become a Hollywood superstar, was inspired by real life.

Writing was like therapy for Samuel and he created



characters that represented different sides of himself. He shot three short films that were screened in January 2026 and now encourages everyone to write and make their own shows.

In 2017, Samuel wrote a book, *Why It's Not Enough to be 'Just' an Actor in the 21st Century*, based on his own journey. It follows his path as an actor when he was forced to write and make his own show due to a lack of opportunities. The book is split into two parts and covers his time in London, LA, New York and Atlanta. The second

half focuses on personal development and explores the lessons he has learned that helped him to progress and keep going.

Samuell directed two episodes of the children's drama *Princess Mirror-Belle* for CBBC and two episodes of ITV1's *Emmerdale*, which aired in December 2025. He loved the experience and believes being a writer and an actor helped with being a director due to the 360-degree understanding of the story.

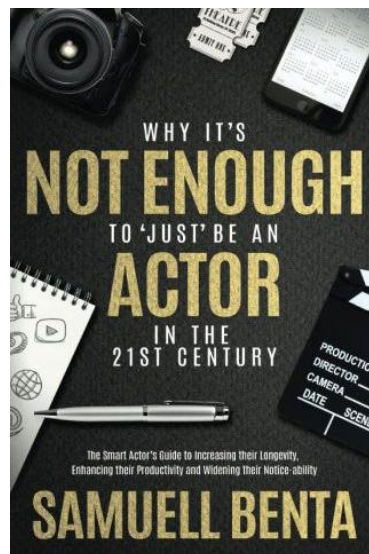
Samuell points to phones as a major distraction

and one of the main reasons young people are not writing enough. He believes they should be encouraged to discover who they are without the noise of the outside world - putting their phones aside and taking time to reflect or meditate.

By Lauryn-Rose Teixeira, aged 13



"I think phones are a major distraction for young people. I encourage them to put them aside and meditate."



Favourite Book?

Awakened Imagination by Neville Goddard.

What are you reading now?

Your Invisible Power by Genevieve Behrend.



Connect with Samuel

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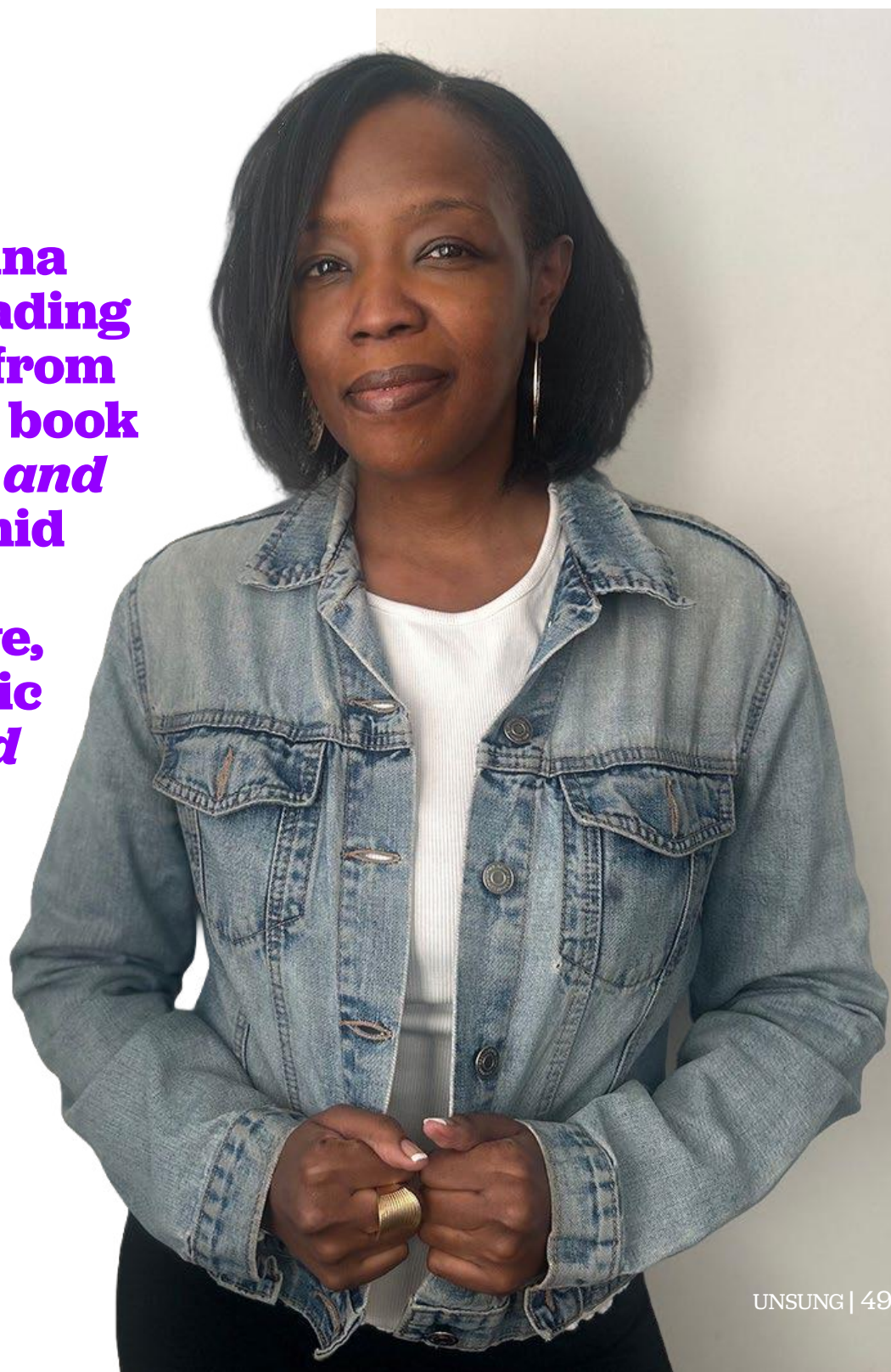
DAVINA HAMILTON

Children's Author Journalist

“

Young Davina enjoyed reading at school - from the picture book series *Meg and Mog* and Enid Blyton's Famous Five, to the classic *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck.

”





Davina Hamilton was born in London to Jamaican parents who always emphasised the importance of being articulate. This must have had an impact on her, as she was often cast as the narrator in school plays.

Davina says her mum is a book-lover and would regularly read the Bible. This is where she believes her connection with books comes from. One of Davina's earliest childhood reads was *The Patchwork Quilt* by Valerie Flournoy and Jerry Pinkney.

Another source of inspiration throughout the years was the stories Davina's mum told her and her sister. These were tales about growing up in Jamaica, sparking Davina's love for a good story. The young Davina enjoyed reading at school - from the picture book series *Meg and Mog* and *Enid Blyton's Famous Five*, to the classic *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck. These books developed her passion for reading.

Davina's professional writing journey began in journalism when she became the Arts Reporter at *The Voice newspaper* in 2002. She then went on to become the Arts Editor.

During this time, she became a mum to two wonderful children, the main inspiration behind her wanting to write children's books. She took a leap of faith and wrote her first rhyming children's story, *Riley Can Be Anything*, which she self-published in 2017.

The book, named after her son, went on to earn critical acclaim, celebrity endorsements, and awards. It was named as The *Independent's* Best Inspirational Book in their 2022 Black History Month list of 13 Best Children's Books with Empowering Black Characters.

Her follow-up books are *Riley Knows He Can*, *Ella Has a Plan* (which she named after her daughter), and *Riley Finds His Beat*.

When she wrote her first book, she was driven by a desire to represent a Black boy - and multiple other Black male characters - in a positive light, as it is well known that Black men have traditionally been reflected negatively in the media. She wanted to play her small part in countering this narrative by representing Black men and boys in an uplifting and inspiring way.

At secondary school, Davina earned top

marks in both GCSE English and Music, so she could have easily been a songwriter. She also played instruments such as the flute and drums. She never considered writing song lyrics, but ironically, is nicknamed 'the rhyming children's author', so any music artists out there who would like a great rhymers to assist them in their songwriting process should give her a shout!

Her author journey has been incredibly rewarding, enabling her to deliver talks and workshops in schools as well as at literary festivals, including The London Book Fair.

"I love all my books for different reasons," Davina says, "but I think *Riley Can Be Anything* would probably be the dearest to my heart, because it kick-started my author journey. It also delivers a timeless message of self-belief and the value of having role models to offer encouragement and support. I would recommend people

share this book with the children in their lives, as it encourages young readers to dream big and reach for the stars."

Davina is currently in a transitional phase of her life and career, so is not sure what's next. She's leaving everything in God's hands and keeping the faith, knowing that the best is yet to come!

By Courtney Jackson,
aged 14



What are you reading now?

The Power of Now by Eckhart Tolle.

A repeated listen of my audiobook collection. I listen to it often and I'm currently revisiting it now.

Connect with Davina



www.davinahamilton.com



https://www.instagram.com/books_bydavina?igsh=djB3cjUwaGpwNXlo



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OKEZIE MORRO

Producer Actor Entrepreneur

“

I got together some amazing Black actors to read beautiful Black stories and filmed them for an online platform. No one had done this before in a TV format in the West and I'm very proud of what we achieved.

”



PROFESSIONAL ★ FUN ★ DRIVEN

Hi, my name is Zanna. I am 10 and the author of two books. This interview is with actor Okezie Morro, the creator of the children's storytelling platform Tàta Storytime. My mum is from the Igbo tribe in Nigeria. Tàta in the Igbo language is an affectionate name for a small child.

Tell me a bit about your childhood and your connection to books.

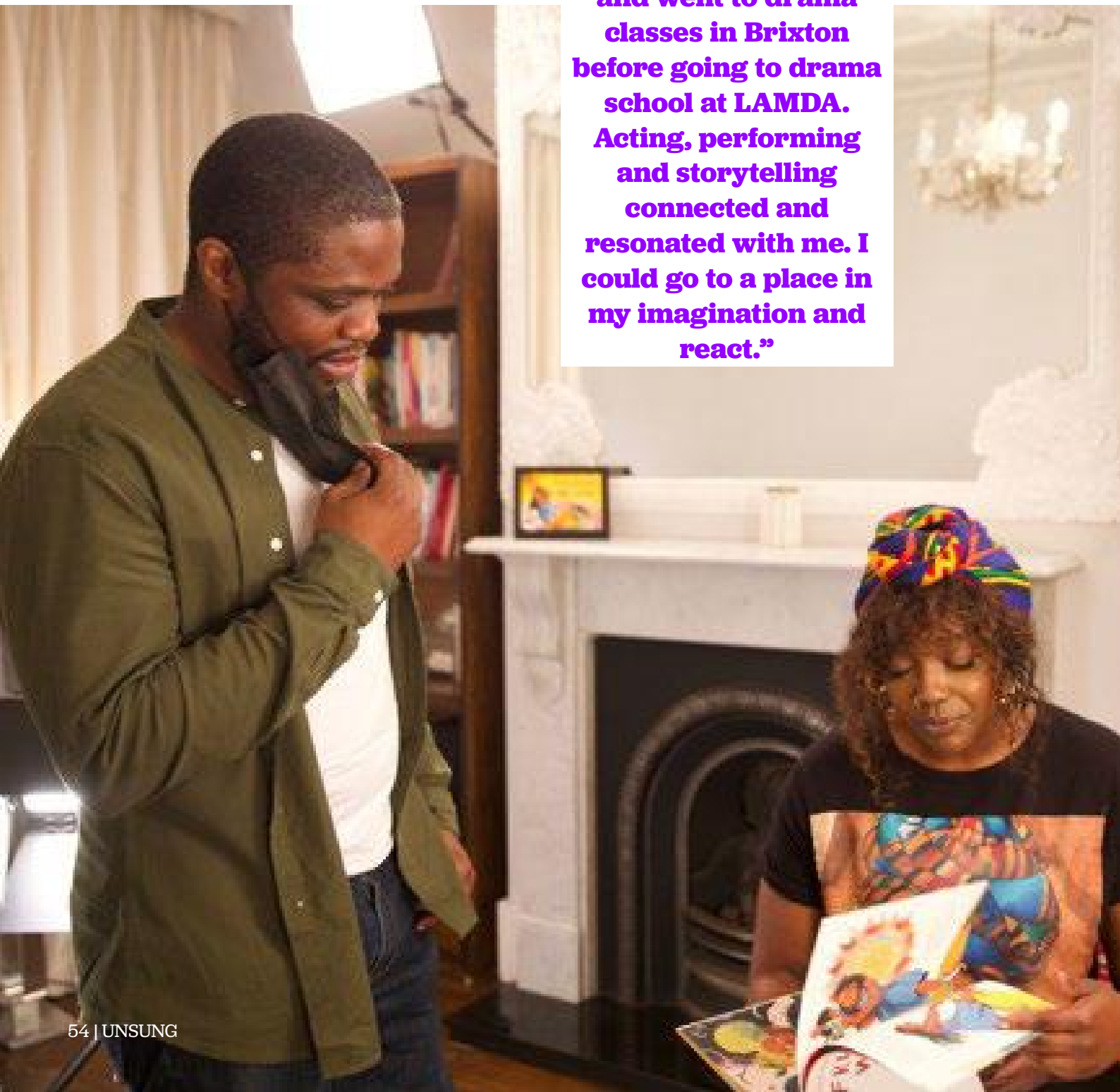
When I was young, I read a lot of comic books, like *The Adventures of Tintin* and *Asterix the Gaul*.

I loved adventure stories, solving crimes and strong exaggerated characters.

Tell me a bit about Tàta Storytime?

My daughter was the inspiration behind Tàta

“I wanted to be a footballer, but after university, I investigated acting and went to drama classes in Brixton before going to drama school at LAMDA. Acting, performing and storytelling connected and resonated with me. I could go to a place in my imagination and react.”



Storytime when she was two years old. I would watch CBBC bedtime stories with her, and what I quickly realised was that most people reading the stories didn't look like us, and the main characters in the books did not look like my daughter. So, in 2020, I got together some amazing Black actors to read beautiful Black stories and filmed them for an online platform. No

one had done this before in a TV format in the West. I'm very proud of what we achieved. I wish I could have recorded more programmes, but it was expensive to produce. Tata Storytime currently sends actors to deliver storytelling clubs in primary schools to help make children better storytellers.

Why do you think representation in Black books is important?

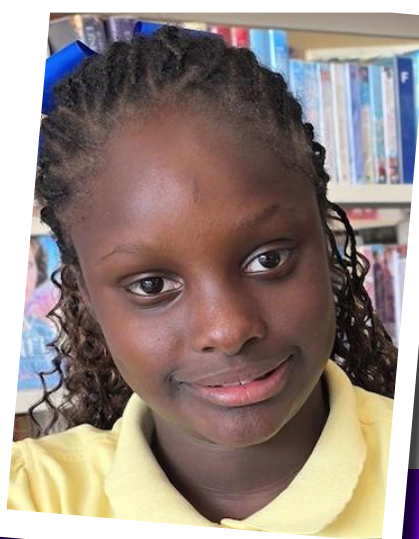
Black people are in all areas of UK society. It is important that children see themselves in top jobs, as leaders and as role models, so they believe that anything is possible. It is just as important that children see themselves in children's books, which is the foundation for early-stage inspiration. A Black person playing The Little Mermaid should be seen as normal. Black people are everywhere, and our stories should be everywhere too.

Who do you think has had the biggest impact on the UK

Black community when it comes to Black literature?

The biggest impact is not an individual achievement but a collective one. People like Malorie Blackman, Professor David Olusoga OBE, Akala, Laura Henry-Allain (who created JoJo & Gran Gran, the book and TV series screened on the BBC), and Stormzy with his foundation. Those are just a few. There is more work to do, and I believe everyone in their own way contributes.

By Zanna Orunsolu, aged 10



Favourite Author?

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

Favourite Book?

More recently, *Half of a Yellow Sun*. Although I also love the classic *Things Fall Apart*.

What are you reading now?

Super Great Kids' Stories: From storytellers around the world. I'm reading this to my children.

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LINTON KWESI JOHNSON OBE

Dub Poet

Mr Linton Kwesi Johnson, also known as LKJ, was born in Chapeltown, Clarendon in Jamaica and is a dub poet, musician and activist.

He came to England at the age of 11 and lived in Brixton. As a teenager, he joined the Black Panthers and later studied Sociology at Goldsmiths College, University of London.

Mr Johnson is a dub poetry pioneer and uses poetry to express his frustrations and hopes. Inspired by the works of Jamaican poet Louise Bennett and Malcolm X, he created a form of spoken word poetry set to reggae, often in Jamaican

Patois, with producer Dennis Bovell, who is famous for creating Lovers Rock. Mr Johnson would talk about racism,

police brutality, and political oppression.

In 1974, he published his first poetry collection, titled *Voices of the Living and the Dead*. His debut album, *Dread Beat An' Blood*, was released in 1978. 'Sonny's Lettah' is one of his most famous poems.

Mr Johnson has released albums on his own record label, LKJ Records, and has toured globally. He worked as a journalist and editor with the Race Today Collective, a group dedicated to addressing racial and social issues in the UK. Through this platform, he voiced the concerns of the Black

community and pushed for equality and change.

In 2002, he became the first Black poet, and second living poet ever, to be published in the Penguin Modern Classics series with *Mi Revalueshanary Fren*. He has won many awards and in 2020 was awarded the PEN Pinter Prize for his outstanding contribution to literature and social justice work.

In January 2026, Goldsmiths University of London honoured Mr Linton Kwesi Johnson by naming a lecture theatre after him.

By Sheldon Barrett, aged 11



Connect with Linton



<https://lintonkwesijohnson.co.uk>

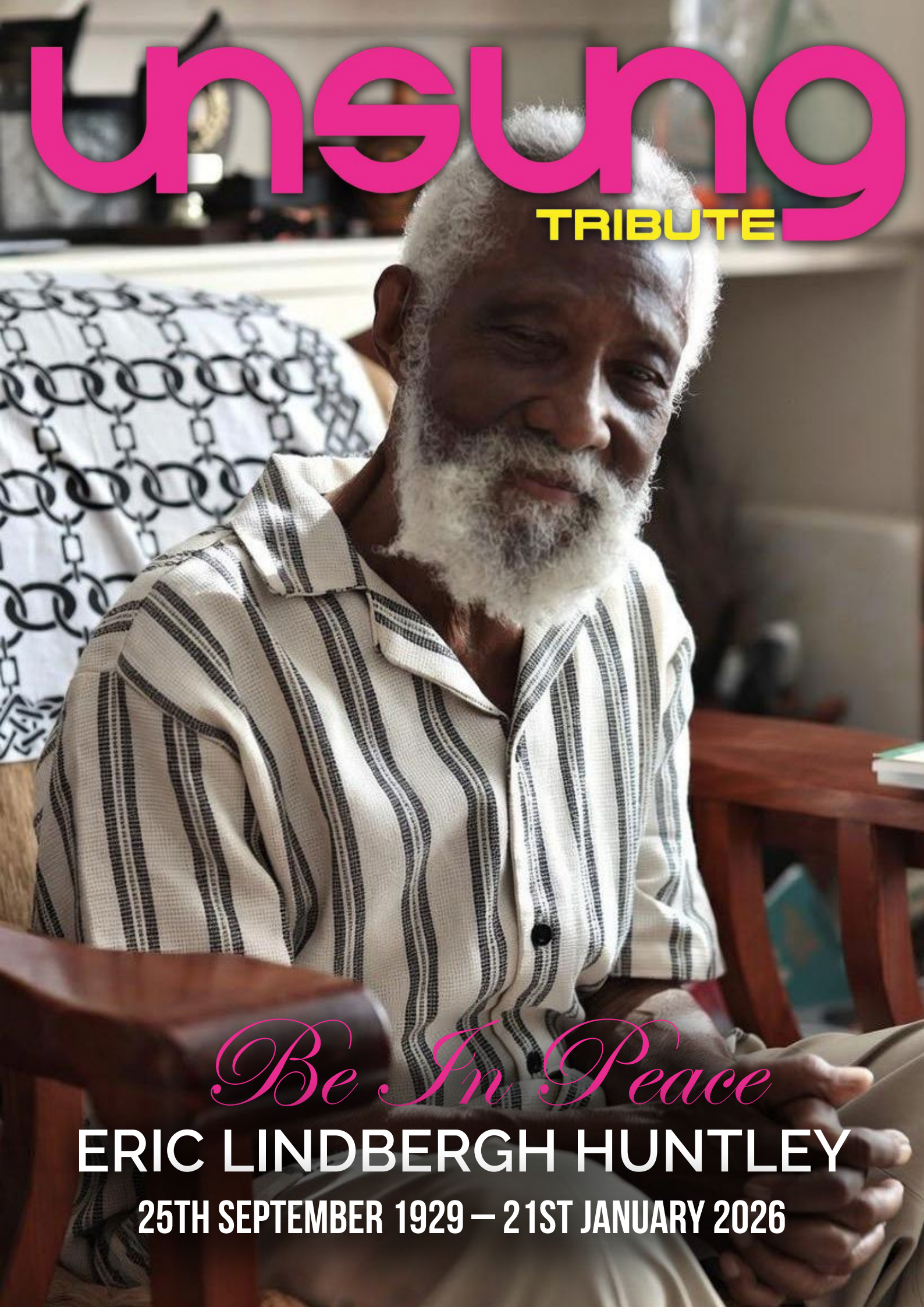
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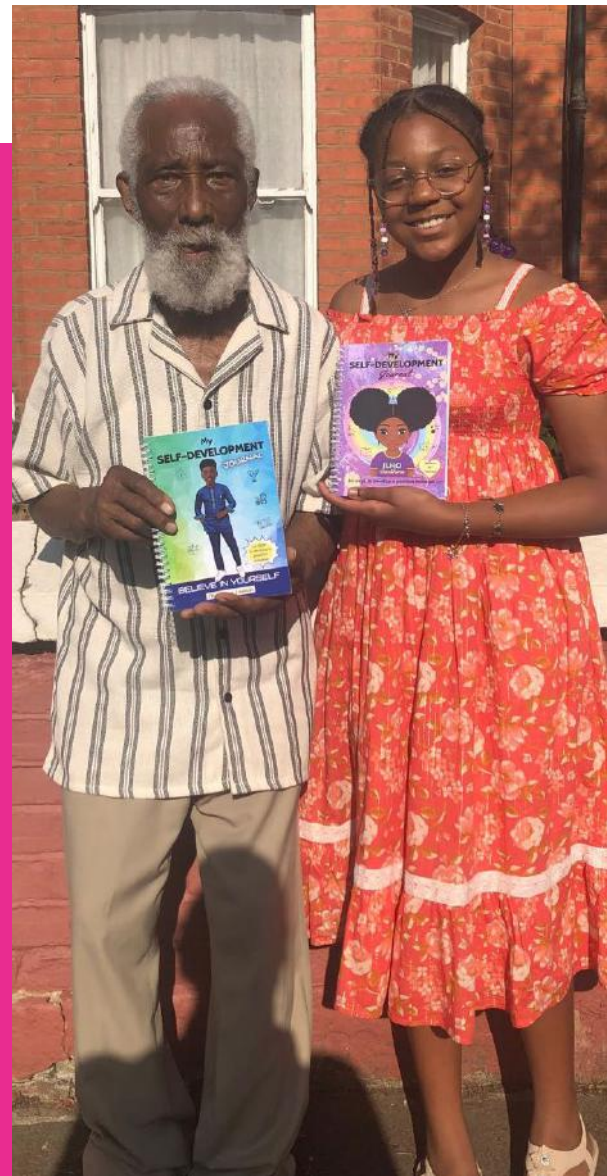
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Ilhora-Lee Louison BCyA, aged 11



"Speaking to you, Baba Huntley, for the first time felt as though I had always known you. You have so much knowledge and so many stories, and you reminded me of my grandad. Thank you for your passion for the community, activism and work in the education and publishing space with your wife Jessica. It is a legacy that will live on forever. Sleep in peace, Sir."

Romeo Bremmer, aged 17



“Mr Huntley, you were such an inspiring person who paved the way for the future generation of Black publishers, writers and booksellers. Thank you, Sir, for your service to the Black community.”
Sarah Kittoe, aged 13



“I was selling clothing made with African textiles at the Children’s Black Book Fair and Mr Huntley came over and said they looked very nice. The lady he was with said one of my hats matched his top, and bought it for him. He was a very nice, friendly and kind man. I am happy that he had one of my hats and that I had the opportunity to meet him.”
Joylen Teixeira, aged 10

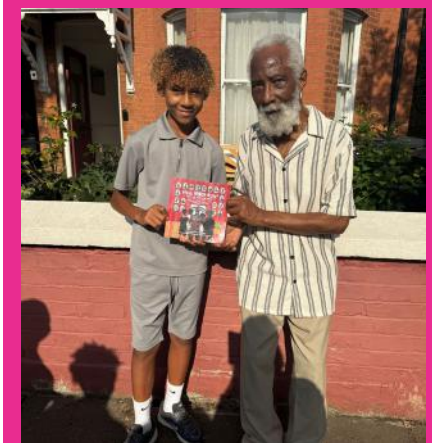


“Dada Eric, you were an inspiration to me and other young children. Even though you were 96, you remained very active in supporting young Black authors with your encouraging words and advice, which means a lot to me.”
Zanna Orunsolu, aged 10



*In fields of pages, wisdom shone
 A life in ink, a seed well sown
 Now in the archives of the soul
 Legacy makes countless whole
 You’ve now walked on beyond
 our sight
 But through words remain pure
 gold and light*
Lauryn-Rose Teixeira, aged 13

“Mr Huntley was very funny. I met him last August. He asked me how old I thought he was. I had researched him so knew and said confidently, “95.” He looked in my eyes and gave a big laugh and said, “Young man, you think you’re very clever, don’t you?” He clearly remembered that I was the one who did his interview in UNSUNG 2 The Windrush Special!
Jahmari Maxwell, aged 12



THE LAST WORD

Meet The Publishers

TRAILBLAZING ★ INNOVATIVE ★ PURPOSE-DRIVEN



As the UK's cultural mix continues to evolve, so too does the question of how diversity shows up on the pages of books for children and young adults. How stories reflect the lived realities of multicultural Britain isn't just a literary concern - it's also an educational one, and it's been shaping conversations for decades.

Romeo, Juliet, Yazmin and Bails set up their family publishing house, **Young LIT Stars**, 10 years ago to publish beautiful Black books written by beautiful Black children. Since then, they have published over 70+ children and young people aged six to 17 across 27 books. A favourite was a group of primary school children from Accra, Ghana whose,

book was called *Deacons Ghana*.

In 2024, they launched The Children's Black Book Fair UK in Hackney, East London. The 2025 fair was opened by publishing legend **Eric Huntley** and master lyricist and author **Michael DeSouza**.

In March 2026, Romeo launched The Children's Black Book Directory UK, a one stop space where people can find children's Black books simply by visiting www.younglitstars/cbbduk

The family recognise that the past 60 years have been a journey for Black British books and massive respect is owed to the trailblazers in Black UK publishing - **New Beacon Books**, founded 1966 by **John La Rose** and **Sarah White**, and **Bogle-L'Ouverture Publications**, founded 1968 by **Eric and Jessica Huntley** -

Creative Director
Yazmin and Award-
winning author Romeo

“Today, a new wave of writers for young readers is challenging representation by re-imagining society through novels, poetry, and picture books - many of which are now being self-published.”

both publishing houses together proved that Black children were readers and their stories mattered.

They see **Margaret Busby** also as a gate-opener in mainstream publishing. In 1967, she became Britain's youngest and first Black woman publisher when she was appointed editorial director at **Allison & Busby**, a company she co-founded. She wasn't a Black publisher in the same grassroots, community-press sense as New Beacon or Bogle-L'Ouverture, but her influence on British publishing is just as important.

Moving forward, they give massive props to the independents. Children's publisher **Verna Wilkins** founded **Tamarind Books** in 1987 to focus on diverse Black, Asian and disabled characters. Later, Tamarind became an imprint of Random House. Verna is the author of *The Life of Stephen Lawrence*, a non-fiction book for children (ages 9-11), a copy of which they are proud to have on their bookshelf.

"It would be remiss of us not to mention my former colleagues **Dotun Adebayo MBE** and **Steve**

Pope. Respectively Arts Editor and Newspaper Editor of *The Voice*, they joined forces in 1992 to create **The X Press**, which for a time stood as Europe's largest publisher of Black-interest books," said Juliet.

Yazmin added: "As a Hackney family, we give a special shout-out to **Valerie Brandes**, Founder, Editor and Publishing Director at Jacaranda Books. We love her and the work she has been doing in this space."

Sixty years on, the landscape of Black British children's books has changed in ways that once felt unimaginable - but there is still work to do. Representation is no longer a radical idea, yet it remains a necessary one, shaping how young readers see themselves and the world around them. Romeo Confirms: "Progress doesn't happen by accident; it happens when stories are championed, platforms are shared, and doors stay open."

Young LIT Stars believe that the publishing of diverse books and stories is still slow but acknowledges that we are moving forward, and the future of children's

books is richer, bolder and more inclusive when we move together.



Juliet:
Award winning
Educator, Author
and Publisher



LIT Stars Founders: Romeo, Juliet and Yazmin

WHO WE ARE

Juliet Bremmer BCAe has written six books and worked in education for over 20 years. She is an award-winning educator: former Head of an English and Media Faculty and Senior Deputy Head Teacher of an Ofsted Outstanding secondary school.

Romeo Bremmer BCyA is a 17-year-old award-winning author of nine books. He was voted Hackney's Outstanding Young Person 2025 and is the London and South East category and overall winner of the NMTF Young Market Trader, 2025.

Yazmin McKenzie is a Publicist who has worked with many of the world's sought-after talents in the entertainment and lifestyle industry, including Simon Cowell, Letitia Wright and Samuel Eto'o.

Connect with The Publishers



www.younglitstars.com | younglitstars.com/juliet



@Romeo Bremmer | @Juliet Coley BCAe | @Yazmin McKenzie



Romeo Bremmer BCyA | Juliet Bremmer BCAe | Yazmin McKenzie

SCAN HERE TO BUY BOOKS
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Favourite Author?

Romeo: Akala

Juliet: Maya Angelou

Yaz: Jacqueline Wilson

Favourite Book?

Romeo: Born a Crime by Trevor Noah

Juliet: Black Boy by Richard Wright

Yaz: 1984 by George Orwell

What are you reading now?

Romeo: An Introduction to Political Philosophy
by Johnathan Wolff

Juliet: Open Water by Caleb Azumah Nelson

Yaz: A Little Life by Hanya Yanagihara

*"This summer we are encouraging all children to read for pleasure
and fall in love with a diverse book"*

SAVE THE DATE

Saturday 22nd August 2026
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