

Black History

The information in this booklet is derived from Kwesi Bacchra's review of "Claudia Jones, a life in exile" by Marika Sherwood.
http://www.brothermalcolm.net/archivedsites/claudia_jones_exile.htm



Claudia Jones

"The Mother of Carnival in Britain"



Name..... Date.....

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Early Life

Claudia Jones was born in Belmont, Port of Spain, Trinidad, in 1915.

Following the post war cocoa price crash, she went with her three sisters to join their parents who were in New York. Claudia was eight years old. Her mother died five years later.

In the Depression, her father got a job as janitor of a run down apartment block in Harlem. Life was hard and they were so poor that the family could not afford to buy a "graduation outfit" she needed to collect the "Roosevelt Award for Good Citizenship" that she won in junior high school.

Her formal education virtually ended in 1932 when she contracted tuberculosis which caused irreparable damage to her lungs. Doctors attributed the disease to the damp apartment the family lived in.

In 1935 Claudia joined the Young Communist League, after reading how the communist party had defended nine Negro boys who were falsely accused of rape in Scottsboro, Alabama. Her talents as a writer and organiser were soon recognised.



(Photo: www.archives.gov/research/american-cities 034.jpg)

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A member of the Communist Party

In 1948, Claudia Jones was elected to the National Committee of the Communist Party of the U.S.A. and was editor for Negro Affairs on the "Daily Worker" newspaper.

A popular speaker and advocate for peace and civil rights, Claudia was arrested several times and eventually imprisoned on trumped up charges of advocating the violent overthrow of the United States government.

Whilst she was in prison, her health deteriorated and in 1955 she was deported, not to Trinidad, but to the United Kingdom, much to the relief of the English Governor General of Trinidad.

She arrived in London in December 1955, having been given an affectionate send off by three hundred and fifty friends and comrades, including the singer Paul Robeson.



Paul Robeson

(picture imagesjournal.com)

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Encountering racism in the UK

Claudia found that the British communists were racist, regarding Black people as "backward".

The Communist Party of Great Britain's view of this intelligent, sometimes feisty woman was that, as a "coloured" colonial subject of the British Empire, too much should not be expected of her. They felt an obligation to the Communist Party of the U.S.A to help Claudia find work but placed her in positions she found frustrating.

In the U.S.A. Claudia had been respected by the communist party which had been the leading political group fighting for racial equality.

Because she did not feel particularly welcome, Claudia turned to the Caribbean community in London where she was warmly welcomed and soon became their undoubted leader.



(Picture: photograph-london.com)

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Race Riots

In the late 1950s, there were attacks on Black people and riots.

In May 1958, a young carpenter from Antigua, Kelso Cochrane, was murdered by six white youths who have never been caught.

A committee, of which Claudia Jones was a member, was formed to approach the Conservative government of the day about the situation. However, the government was more interested in pushing through racist immigration control legislation and refusing to ratify the ILO convention on racial discrimination.

From that point on, until her untimely death six years later, Claudia became the foremost Black leader in Britain.

And so Carnival begins...

Claudia founded and edited the West Indian Gazette in 1958. Under its auspices, in response to the riots, she began to organise carnivals. These Mardi Gras celebrations were indoor events. Their theme was "A people's art is the genesis of their freedom". These events would evolve into the Notting Hill Carnival a few months after Claudia's death.

For many years there was opposition to carnival. In 1989 the authorities managed to take control of the administration of carnival, and only Black people chosen by the government are allowed to run the heavily restricted carnival that now takes place on August bank holiday weekend each year.



(picture: thenottinghillcarnival.com)

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Read the information about Claudia Jones' early life and then answer these questions:

1. Where was Claudia born?

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2. How old was she when she went to the U.S.A.?

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3. Who went to America with her?

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4. Why did she go to the United States?

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5. How old was Claudia when her mother died?

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6. What award did she win in junior high school?

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7. Which illness did she contract in 1982?

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8. Why did she join the Young Communist League?

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Use a dictionary to find different meanings of the word **depression**.

Write these out.

1.
2.
3.
4.

Decide which meaning is most appropriate in the section about Claudia Jones' early life.

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Use the word in four different sentences to show the different meanings.

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Claudia had TB.

TB is the abbreviation for tuberculosis.

Use your dictionary to find out what these abbreviations mean.

BBC

FA

OAP

RAF

PhD

CAB

TA

VIP

DJ

AAA

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Choose 5 of the abbreviations and use each one in a sentence.

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Here are some words from "A member of the Communist Party".

They are incorrectly spelt.

- Correct the spelling mistakes.

deprotatoin

advicat

voilent

deterioratid

affectonate

- Arrange the words in alphabetical order.

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Here is part of the section about "Encountering Racism in the UK".

Read the sentences and find an alternative word or words for those in bold type.

Claudia found that the British communists were racist, regarding Black people as "**backward**".

The Communist Party of Great Britain's view of this **intelligent**, sometimes **feisty** woman was that, as a "coloured" colonial subject of the British Empire, too much should not be expected of her. They **felt an obligation** to the Communist Party of the U.S.A to help Claudia find work but placed her in positions she found **frustrating**.

In the U.S.A. Claudia had been **respected** by the communist party which had been the leading political group fighting for racial equality.

Write the alternatives you have found here:

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In the section "Race Riots" you read about Kelso Cochrane.

Use www.google.co.uk to find out more about him.

Write what you have found out.

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Many people from across the U.K. travel to London each August bank holiday weekend to see the Notting Hill Carnival.

Imagine you are at the carnival. Plan and draft a piece of writing that describes the sights, sounds and smells around you.

(There is lots of information, including photographs and videos available on the internet, to help you research this topic.)

Write what you have found out on a separate piece of paper.



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Core curriculum references:

| Topic | Entry 3 reference | Level 1 reference |
|-------------------------------|---|---|
| Reading for meaning | Rt E3.1 Rt E3.7 | |
| Use a dictionary or thesaurus | Rw E3.3 Rw E3.4 | |
| Abbreviations and their use | Ws E3.3 | Ws L1.3 |
| Correcting spelling mistakes | Ww E3.1 | |
| Alphabetical order | Ww E3.1 | |
| Researching a topic | | Rt L1.4, Wt L1.5 |
| Creative writing | Wt E3.1, E3.2, E3.4 Rs E3.3 Ws E3.1, E3.2, E3.3 | Wt L1.5, Rs L1.2, Ws L1.1, 1.2, 1.3 |