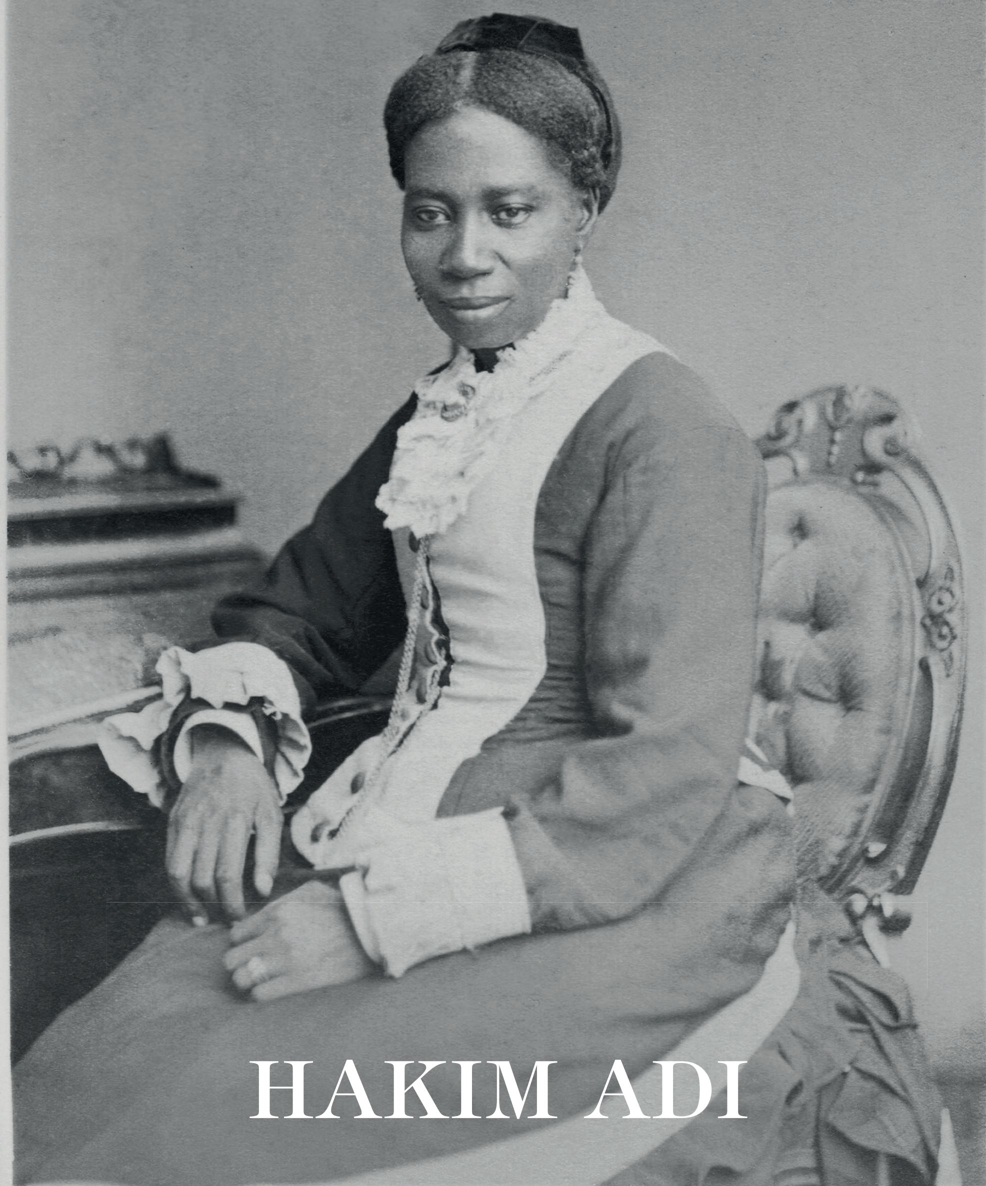
AFRICAN AND CARIBBEAN PEOPLE IN BRITAIN

A History



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Preface

My original aim in writing this book was to provide not just an overview of the history of all those of African and Caribbean heritage in Britain, but also an introduction to the latest research. For many years the key work on the subject was Peter Fryer's *Staying Power: The History of Black People in Britain*, first published in 1984. That was almost forty years ago and there has been a considerable amount of new research since that time, as well as some rethinking about the subject.[1]

Fryer used the term 'Black' to include those of South Asian origin in a way that was common at the time but unusual today. Research on those connected with the Indian subcontinent has subsequently been greatly developed by Rozina Visram in her two books, *Ayahs, Lascars and Princes: The Story of Indians in Britain 1700–1947* and *Asians in Britain: 400 Years of History*, as well as by other historians.[2] Rather than using the well-established terms 'Black' or 'Black British', I have chosen to use the phrase African and Caribbean people for the title, and throughout I have written about the history of those of African and Caribbean heritage. That is because, even though I have edited a book entitled *New Perspectives on Black British History*, I'm not any more comfortable with that term than I would be with the term 'White British History'. It might be argued that there is only British history, with no other qualifiers, but unfortunately those of African and Caribbean heritage have too often been excluded from it. All people, including those of dual heritage, have a specific geographical cultural heritage, based on their places of origin, or that of their families, and I do not see why this should be denied to those of African and Caribbean heritage who have made such an impact on the history of Britain.

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I take for granted that those who were born or have resided in the country can be considered British, or citizens of Britain and part of the history of Britain, irrespective of what modern racist legislation might declare to the contrary.

Fryer was not the first to attempt a general survey on the subject. As early as 1948, at a time when some people erroneously consider that this history began, Kenneth Little, a British anthropologist, published his book *Negroes in Britain: A Study of Racial Relations in English Society.* Although this focused mainly on 'the Coloured Folk of Cardiff', it also included an entire chapter 'The Negroes in Britain – 1600 A.D. to the Present Day'. A century before Little, in 1848, Wilson Armistead, a Leeds-based abolitionist, produced his *A Tribute for the Negro*, which, although not a history in the modern sense, contained much historical material on Africans in Britain, as well as elsewhere.[3] Since that time there have been many others who have contributed to our knowledge, such as pioneering writers Nigel File and Chris Power, who with their *Black Settlers in Britain* responded to demands from school students during the 1970s for more representative textbooks, as well as James Walvin, who published his *Black and White* and other work during the same decade.[4] One of the most prominent historians has been Marika Sherwood, who began writing about this history in the mid-1980s and has been a prolific writer and researcher ever since. She has written on almost every aspect of this history from the Tudor period onwards and has publications too numerous to mention.[5] Just as importantly, she has been a champion for this history over many years, one of the founders of the Black and Asian Studies Association in 1991 and for many years the editor of its *Newsletter*. For over thirty-five years she has been a tireless campaigner for changes to the National History Curriculum in schools, as well as for changes in the preservation and to the presentation of historical sources in museums and archives. She has probably done more than anyone to encourage the study and teaching of this history, as well as being a mentor to many, and has been largely unacknowledged for her efforts.

As a result of the work of Marika Sherwood, as well as many others, in recent years this history has become much more visible. In 2017 the broadcaster David Olusoga presented his acclaimed prime-time television series *Black and British*, followed by a book of the

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same title.[6] Olusoga is part of a long line of researchers of African and Caribbean heritage who have addressed the fact that standard presentations of Britain's history have often neglected or excluded those of African and Caribbean heritage. One of the earliest scholars was a self-educated Jamaican, J. A. Rogers, who lived and worked in the United States. His research and publications were designed to combat Eurocentric and racist views of history. In several of his works he writes about the history of African and Caribbean people in Britain, although his focus is often on prominent individuals. A meticulous researcher, his best-known works include *World's Great Men of Color* and *Nature Knows No Color-Line*, which were first published over seventy years ago.[7] Another important scholar was Edward Scobie (1918–1996), a Dominican writer and publisher who produced one of the first surveys of the subject in *Black Britannia: A History of Blacks in Britain*, first published in 1972. During the 1970s, two pioneering books were published by the Nigerian historian Folarin Shyllon: *Black People in Britain, 1555–1833* and *Black Slaves in Britain*.[8] Ron Ramdin, a Trinidadian historian based in Britain, published another important survey, *The Making of the Black Working Class in Britain*, which first appeared in 1987.[9] More recently there have been significant contributions from the African American historian Gretchen Gerzina, most notably her book, *Black England: Life Before Emancipation* and the radio series, *Britain's Black Past*.[10]

The historian working on the subject today therefore benefits from the work of numerous predecessors and I have endeavoured to draw on the work of as many researchers as possible. However, although there has been important new work, the focus of many historians remains firmly on the twentieth century. There is still a lack of research on the period before 1500 and on the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries, as well as the period after 1985. In short, there is still much research that remains to be done to strengthen our knowledge of this history.

The modern historian is also able to make use of the many historical sources and records that are now online, a particularly important resource in the midst of a pandemic. These include, for example, the University of Glasgow's database Runaway Slaves in Britain: Bondage, Freedom and Race in the Eighteenth Century, as well as some of

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the digitized material held at the Black Cultural Archives and the National Archives in London.[11] In 2003 the Chief Executive of the National Archives admitted 'it has recently been acknowledged the archives contain rich sources of African and Asian heritage', and then added 'once it has been determined what there actually is, the best way to promote it must be determined'.[12] However, in the years since, progress has been painfully slow. Unfortunately, government departments have destroyed many important documents relating to this history and still withhold many others.

It is a great shame that other repositories that hold important sources for the study of the history of those of African and Caribbean heritage in Britain do not make much more of it widely available online. The British Library, for example, has digitized some important interviews, but these are only available to readers who are physically at the library. Today, those outside the universities and major archives, such as the historian Jeffrey Green, are making some of their research available online.[13] So too are many others, such as African Stories in Hull and East Yorkshire, the Black Coal Miners Project and the Young Historians Project, which are collecting important oral histories and other historical material, often relating to neglected subjects such as histories of African women.[14]

In writing the long history of people of African and Caribbean heritage in Britain, historians can now utilize a variety of sources. DNA records and archaeology have proved illuminating for the period before 1500, although here great caution is required with the interpretation of scientific evidence, as recent discoveries relating to the appearance of Cheddar Man have shown. Much more attention needs to be paid to court and parish records for the early history of Africans in the British Isles. Indeed, a variety of sources can and must be used. The sources for this history are not only to be found in Britain. To give one example, the papers of twentieth-century London-based organizations, such as the Nigerian Progress Union and West African Students' Union, are to be found in Nigeria, although I also recall finding a rare West African Students' Union poster from the early 1930s almost hidden in archives in Washington, DC

It was more than forty years ago when I first began my own historical research and there have been many significant developments

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during that period. However, even when I first began my research on the history of Africans in Britain there was a tendency for this history to be reduced to the one that began only in 1948 with the arrival of a certain ship from the Caribbean. We felt then that such an approach not only obscured a much longer history, but also gave prominence only to the experiences of those who migrated to Britain from the Caribbean in the post-war period. In short, it did more to obscure than to enlighten us about Britain's past. Today, when the majority of Britain's Black population have migrated from or are connected with the African continent, it is even more vital that what has come to be referred to as 'Black British' history reflects the experiences and struggles of all those of African and Caribbean heritage. This history is always part of Britain's history, just as it is part of the wider history of the African diaspora and of Britain's colonial connections with Africa, the Caribbean and the United States as well as other parts of the world.

Despite the efforts of researchers and campaigners this history has remained largely hidden or obscured for too long. It has only been taught by a few dedicated school teachers and seldom in universities. In 1995 I was appointed to one of the few, and perhaps the first, academic posts in 'Black British' history at Middlesex University. There were few others by the time I became the first person of African heritage to become a professor of history in Britain twenty years later. It was not until after the Black Lives Matter protests in 2020 that there was a significant increase in the numbers of academic posts in this field. Indeed, for much of the last forty years this is a history that has largely been developed and researched by those outside academia. It has been sustained by community historians, through heritage walks and initiatives such as the Black Cultural Archives in London, as well as other independent archives and regional initiatives. Not only has the history of people of African and Caribbean heritage in Britain often been centred around their struggles, but to firmly establish this history requires a significant struggle as well.

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The Early African Presence

In January 2016, *Mail Online* and several other media outlets in Britain announced that a new GCSE history course for Britain's school pupils, focusing on migration, was likely to teach them that 'the nation's earliest inhabitants were Africans who were in Britain before the English'.[1] The *Mail* lamented what it referred to as 'the extraordinary rewriting of our island's history', which it explained had 'been branded pro-immigration propaganda by critics'. One such critic described this presentation of history as 'indoctrination', others as 'disturbing and dangerous'.[2] The *Mail* claimed that such plans had provoked 'uproar', although it did acknowledge that, prior to the arrival of the Anglo-Saxons, a Roman legion of North Africans was stationed at Hadrian's Wall in Cumbria during the third century. However, having consulted an eminent historian, who concluded, to the *Mail*'s evident satisfaction, 'there is no evidence they ever settled here', the *Mail* exposed the individual responsible for such so-called 'indoctrination', a 'Marxist writer and journalist' called Peter Fryer. Concerned readers were perhaps reassured by V. S. Naipaul's view that 'This absurd supposition of Africans inhabiting Britain before the English only goes to show how our once esteemed centres of learning, Oxford and Cambridge, have been insidiously eroded by a dangerous dogma that, very like IS today, wrought misery and havoc in Russia, China and the Eastern bloc, where for all practical purposes it has failed.'[3]

Fryer, the author of *Staying Power: The History of Black People in Britain*, first published in 1984, and continually in print since that time, began his carefully researched survey of 2,000 years of British history with the sentence, 'There were Africans in Britain before the English came here.'[4] He was not alone in this view. In a paper presented to the

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International Conference on the History of Blacks in Britain held in London as long ago as 1981, but published much later, a distinguished academic, Paul Edwards, had opined 'it would be a nice irony against racist opinion if it could be demonstrated that African communities were settled in England before the English invaders arrived from Europe centuries later'.[5]

The presence of Africans in Britain during the Roman period has been established by historians for many years. It is therefore correct to say that Africans were present before the settlement, centuries later, of Angles, Saxons and Jutes, although perhaps incorrect to say that these migrant communities are the main ancestors of the modern English.[6] The latest DNA evidence also suggests that the Angles and Saxons played a less important part in the ancestry of the English than had previously been supposed and that African migrants had reached Britain perhaps a thousand years before the Romans. Much of the evidence for an early African presence comes from tooth enamel oxygen isotope evidence, which can be used to determine the geographical source of water drunk by an individual in childhood, but it is evidence that needs to be considered with caution.[7] However, when used with other archaeological evidence it presents interesting questions regarding an early African presence in Britain. There is also even more interesting speculation, such as the possibility that the name of the Isle of Thanet in Kent might be derived from a Phoenician word. Enamel oxygen isotope evidence from human remains again suggests that the area might have received North African migrants in the Bronze Age.[8] There has long been speculation about ancient African populations throughout the Britain Isles both before and after the Roman period and clearly much more research needs to be done to establish the veracity of such claims.[9]

A significant development in understanding this early history was the revelation in February 2018 that those who might be considered some of the first Britons – that is the first to provide genes that can be found amongst some of the modern inhabitants of Britain – had 'dark to black' skin, as well as dark hair and blue eyes. Indeed, one newspaper headline boldly proclaimed that according to the latest DNA study 'the first Britons were black'.[10] The research, conducted by the Natural History Museum, analysed the skeletal remains of Cheddar Man, first discovered in a cave in Somerset in 1903, who is thought to

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have lived in England some 10,000 years ago amongst a population of only 12,000. The almost complete skeleton of Cheddar Man is the oldest so far discovered of a modern human in Britain. The study showed that migrants who originated in Africa, and came to Britain via western Asia and Europe, maintained darker skin pigmentation for much longer periods than was previously thought and that the development of pale skin pigmentation took place much more recently. The research into the origins and appearance of Cheddar Man suggests that the population of western European hunter-gatherers of that period almost certainly looked similar to Cheddar Man, with 'dark to black' skin. The earliest Europeans, just like the earliest Britons, could also be considered Black people. Notions of Britishness and Englishness once more need to be rethought.[11] The analysis of the skeletal remains of Cheddar Man also demonstrated significant scientific advances. Although the analysis of DNA has been possible for several years, techniques have markedly improved in the twenty-first century and created the possibility for new revelations about the ancient population of Britain in the future.

It has long been known that Britain was the place of cremation of the 'African emperor', Septimius Severus, who was Libyan-born and of Berber origin. Britain was also governed by several other Africans, including Quintus Lollius Urbicus, who came from what is Algeria today, was Governor of Britain from 139–142 CE and supervised the building of the Antonine Wall in Scotland. Several other African Roman governors also originated from what is today Libya, Tunisia and Algeria, as did numerous military commanders and soldiers.[12]

For some years, historians have known that Africans were part of the Roman army of occupation in Britain, especially connected with the period when Severus and his sons ruled the Roman empire.[13] There was a unit of North African soldiers, known as the *Numerus Maurorum Aurelianorum*, stationed at the western end of Hadrian's Wall, near what is today Burgh-by-Sands in Cumbria, as is evident from Roman records and several inscriptions found in the area. It is recorded that one of the Black soldiers in this unit presented a garland of cypress boughs to Emperor Severus, although according to Severus' modern biographer, this source, which also mentions the human sacrifice of 'black victims', cannot be entirely relied upon as established

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historical fact.[14] Archaeological evidence dating from the second and third centuries CE also includes the especially distinctive 'Roman head pots' said to be unquestionably of North African design, found at Chester, York and other sites, including some in Scotland. This shows not just that some of those serving in the Roman army of occupation were recruited from Africa but that it is likely that there were either 'soldier-potters', or African potters accompanying the army.[15] Referring to samples of cooking vessels found near York, one expert concluded that they were made 'by Africans for the use of Africans'.[16] Other evidence of an African presence in Roman Britain has been found from tombstones and other archaeological finds, including writing in what has been described as 'neo-Punic script'.[17] In short, there is much evidence of the presence in Britain not only of African soldiers but also civilians from what are today Libya, Tunisia and Algeria, all part of the Roman province of Africa at the time (itself a place name possibly derived from a language spoken in the region that was subsequently applied to the entire continent).

The latest archaeological and scientific techniques have been utilized to analyse human remains found in what was the Roman city of Eboracum, now York, where Emperor Septimius Severus died in 211 CE. At the beginning of the twentieth century people digging in a street in York discovered a 1,700-year-old stone coffin of a woman. She had been buried with jewellery, including jet and ivory bracelets, as well as other valuable possessions, and was undoubtedly of elite status. It was not until 2010 that archaeologists were fully able to analyse the skeleton, which they discovered to be that of a young woman, probably between eighteen and twenty-three years old and of North African origin.[18] The archaeologists were even able to make a reconstruction to show us what this African 'Ivory Bangle Lady' may have looked like.[19] This and other research has shown that those of African heritage, including African women of all classes, were a settled population before the arrival of the Angles and Saxons. Such findings prompted one leading archaeologist to conclude that analysis of the 'Ivory Bangle Lady' and others like her, contradicts common popular assumptions about the make-up of Roman-British populations, as well as the view that 'African immigrants in Roman Britain were of low status, male and likely to have been slaves'.[20]

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Another young woman from North Africa has been discovered by archaeologists and scientists analysing human remains from the Roman period at the Museum of London. Tests showed that the 'Lant Street Teenager', who was only fourteen at the time of her death, had been born in North Africa but probably had ancestors from south of the Sahara. The teenager had only been living in London for a few years, prompting questions about the circumstances of her migration. Another skeleton found in London is of a middle-aged African man who had probably grown up in London and suffered from diabetes.[21] DNA analysis of such remains shows the diversity of Roman towns and cities, but also the fact that Africans could be found living in many parts of Britain. Recent analysis of human remains suggests that not only those of North African origin found their way to Britain but others from further south in Africa such as 'Beachy Head Lady' as well. This name refers to skeletal remains first discovered near Eastbourne in southern England in the 1950s which are thought to date from the mid-third century CE, in the middle of the Roman period, and are of a young woman. Although she is thought to have grown up in the area, analysis of her remains suggests that her origin was clearly from a region of Africa that was not part of the Roman empire, but that she was probably either born in Sussex or brought to Britain at a very young age. Such evidence poses fascinating questions about the past and the possibility of families of Africans living in Britain in ancient times.[22]

THE EARLY MEDIEVAL PERIOD

Although we are learning more about the presence of Africans and those of African descent in ancient and Roman Britain, at present we have very little knowledge of this presence for almost one thousand years following the main Roman exodus. This is partly because an African presence is not immediately visible, although there are certainly a few pictorial representations, and partly because very little research has been carried out. There are, however, numerous myths and legends about Africans during this early period, most notably that of Gormund, 'King of the Africans', who it is said ruled Ireland and invaded and 'ravaged England' with thousands of African troops

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in alliance with the Saxons. The legend of Gormund is mentioned in many sources, including Geoffrey of Monmouth's *The History of the Kings of Britain*, written in the twelfth century.[23] According to Geoffrey:

> After Malgo succeeded Careticus, a lover of civil war, and hateful to God and to the Britons. The Saxons, discovering his fickle disposition, went to Ireland for Gormund, king of the Africans, who had arrived there with a very great fleet, and had subdued that country. From thence, at their traitorous instigation, he sailed over into Britain, which the perfidious Saxons in one part, in another the Britons by their continual wars among themselves were wholly laying waste. Entering therefore into alliance with the Saxons, he made war upon king Careticus, and after several battles fought, drove him from city to city, till at length he forced him to Cirencester, and there besieged him. Here Isembard, the nephew of Lewis, king of the Franks, came and made a league of amity with him, and out of respect to him renounced the Christian faith, on condition that he would assist him to gain the kingdom of Gaul from his uncle, by whom, he said, he was forcibly and unjustly expelled out of it. At last, after taking and burning the city, he had another fight with Careticus, and made him flee beyond the Severn into Wales. He then made an utter devastation of the country, set fire to the adjacent cities, and continued these outrages until he had almost burned up the whole surface of the island from the one sea to the other; so that the tillage was everywhere destroyed, and a general destruction made of the husbandmen and clergy, with fire and sword. This terrible calamity caused the rest to flee withersoever they had any hopes of safety.

Other early historical reports, such as those from the Venerable Bede, record that the North African abbot Hadrian was sent by the Pope to accompany the new Archbishop of Canterbury to England in 668 CE. Hadrian, it is reported, was initially asked to become archbishop himself, but refused the post. He later become the Abbot of St Peter and St Paul's in Canterbury. Bede described him as 'vir natione Afir', which has been translated as a 'man of African race'. His exact origins are, however, unknown and some historians suggest that he was a Berber from today's Libya. It is thought that Hadrian, who spoke both Latin and Greek as well as Old English, had a major influence on the structure of

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the Christian church in England, which he helped to reform, and on education and Anglo-Saxon literature. He has recently been referred to as 'the African who transformed Anglo-Saxon England'.[24] It is thought that he brought with him some important North African literary works, at a time when Christianity was more established there than it was in Britain, and introduced students to new ideas in various subjects from astronomy, medicine and law to history and philosophy. As a later writer put it, England's cultural roots come from four strands, the learning of Greece, Rome, as well as the Hebrew tradition, 'and the light that came out of Africa'.[25] Recent archaeological isotopic analysis of the human remains found at a seventh-century cemetery in Ely, at sites in Wales dated earlier than the seventh century, and at a burial site in Northumberland, dated from the seventh to ninth centuries, have also identified skeletons of men, women and children that may have a North African origin, suggesting that links between England and the African continent might have been more common than previously thought.[26]

Once again it is DNA analysis of skeletal remains which reveals that Africans were certainly living in Britain in the early medieval and medieval periods. In 2013, a skeleton found in a Gloucestershire river was identified as that of an African woman dating from between the late ninth to early eleventh centuries CE, that is, before the Norman conquest. At present, however, nothing more is known about how she arrived or her status. No doubt our knowledge will increase as more research is undertaken.[27] Another young African woman has been identified from a Saxon burial site at North Elmham, in Norfolk, dated around 1000 CE, but again nothing is definitely known of the circumstances that place her there.[28] Such evidence of the presence of African women in pre-medieval England has in the past been linked to slavery, or at least capture. Historians have suggested that this presence might be the result of Viking raids on North Africa, or Muslim Spain, which ancient annals in Irish and Arabic report brought African captives, 'blue men', to Ireland.[29] There now seems to be other corroborating evidence for these reports, although no evidence that Vikings brought enslaved Africans to England.[30] Others, in rather more racist tones, have suggested that the young woman at North Elmham originated in Ancient Ghana and was trafficked across the Sahara, but with even

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less evidence to support this speculation.[31] It might just as plausibly be argued that these African women came from Africa to Muslim Spain and from there to Britain, since there is evidence from coins, real and imitation, as well as other sources, that trade between England and the Muslim world existed long before the Norman conquest.[32]

In the late twelfth century a monk named Richard of Devizes produced his *Chronicon* or chronicle of the reign of Richard I. In one descriptive passage he refers to his dislike of the city of London because 'all sorts of men crowd together there from every country under the heavens'. These include 'Moors' or 'Garamantes', a term specifically referring to Africans, who are the only 'sorts of men' described by geographical origin.[33] What is particularly interesting about Richard of Devizes' description is that it suggests that 'Moors' were fairly numerous in London and quite commonplace. A few years after this description, in 1205, King John 'gave a mandate to the constable of Northampton to retain Peter the Saracen, the maker of crossbows, and another with him, for the king's service and allow him 9d a day'.[34] Saracen was a vague term, but one that was often used to describe Africans. It is not clear if this mandate refers to two 'Saracens' or two crossbow-makers, but it suggests that those of probable African heritage could provide useful skills. This reference is in stark contrast to the disparaging remarks of Richard of Devizes, who appears to regard Africans as a social nuisance and a blight on the city of London.

There is also the skeleton of 'Ipswich Man' found in the cemetery of Greyfriars monastery and buried between 1258–1300 CE. It seems likely that Ipswich Man was another North African, probably from Tunis, the capital of modern Tunisia. Historians think this is the case because the Greyfriars monastery was built by Robert Tiptoft, a colleague of Richard de Clare, and both men went on a crusade together in 1270. In the *Flores Historiarum*, a medieval history, it states de Clare brought 'four captive Saracens' with him to England from Tunis in 1272. It may be that Ipswich Man was one of those four captured during the Crusades, but he is just as likely to have been a free man and possibly even a friar by the time of his death.[35] It was during the thirteenth century that we find one of the earliest pictorial depictions of an African man in England. This occurs in the *Domesday*

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Abbreviato, an abbreviated version of the famous Doomsday Book, the survey of the country demanded by William the Conqueror in 1085. One of the illustrations in the *Domesday Abbreviato* from about 1241, accompanying the capital letter for the entry for Derbyshire, shows a man of African descent, from his dress probably not someone of noble status. It is not known if he represented a living person, nor exactly why he is depicted. Perhaps his image suggests that Africans were not unknown to the artist or scribe responsible.

Evidence of Africans in England during this period has sometimes been connected with slavery but often without compelling evidence. One of the earliest records of an enslaved African is, however, from the thirteenth century. It is recorded in the Calendar of Patent Rolls of Henry III for 21 June 1259 that the king sitting at Windsor had issued a 'Mandate to all persons to arrest an Ethiopian of the name of Bartholemew, sometime a Saracen, slave (*servus*) of Roger de Lyntin, whom the said Roger brought with him to England, the said Ethiopian having run away from his said lord, who has sent an esquire of his to look for him: and they are to deliver him to the said esquire to the use of the said Roger.'[36] The fate of Bartholemew is unknown, but it is important to note that this early record of an enslaved African is also a report of an African engaged in the struggle for self-liberation. His act of resistance is one that would be adopted by many other enslaved Africans in Britain in later centuries.

More evidence has now been discovered about the diversity of England in the medieval period from an analysis of the remains of those in cemeteries associated with the Black Death in fourteenth-century Smithfield, London. From the analysis of forty-one sets of human remains, it seems likely that several may have been African, or had African ancestry, suggesting a very diverse population in fourteenth-century London, with perhaps almost 30 per cent of the population 'with non-White European ancestry'. Such results clearly suggest that in future and with more research we will have much more extensive knowledge of African populations in the British Isles before 1500.[37] Our knowledge about the diversity of the population in medieval England has been aided by new techniques in bioarchaeology and DNA analysis in recent years, but also by the fact that since the 1990s researchers have become more aware that Africans were present in

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the British Isles before 1500 and therefore have begun to research and record their presence. As two of the researchers explained in 2019:

> for the past 15 years, colleagues and visiting researchers to the Museum of London and Museum of London Archaeology have been anecdotally observing the presence of people with Black ancestry and dual heritage in the medieval cemetery populations from London. Writing today, we can see that by not formally recording their presence, we have significantly contributed to their 'official absence' and further served to marginalize them from mainstream knowledge and academic discourse.[38]

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African Tudors and Stuarts

For many years, any discussion concerning the presence of Africans from the late fifteenth to early seventeenth centuries in England and Scotland began with the same question: when did the first enslaved Africans arrive? Some historians considered that for England this was in 1555, while others suggested a date slightly later in the century, when English trafficking of Africans was initiated by Hawkins, Drake and others.[1] These opinions were countered by those who advanced the argument that England's involvement in the transatlantic trafficking of enslaved Africans did not properly commence until the mid-seventeenth century, or by those who expressed the view that it began much earlier but had remained largely hidden from the gaze of historians.[2] As we will see in this chapter, it is misleading to connect the presence of Africans only with human trafficking in this period. Most historians now consider that the status of Africans in the British Isles was more likely to be one of relative liberty rather than enslavement. Nevertheless, it was undoubtedly a period when Europe's relationship with Africa and Africans was already undergoing a fundamental change and was becoming increasingly exploitative.

By 1500 the trafficking of Africans to Europe, and across the Atlantic to the newly discovered American continent, had already been initiated by the Portuguese government and developed by private licence holders in Portugal, Spain and elsewhere. By the late fifteenth century, it was also the case that Africans, with royal approval, had organized their own confraternities in several Spanish cities and were purchasing the freedom of other Africans.[3] Historians hold differing views with regard to how many Africans were enslaved and transported from Africa in this early period, but it was certainly several

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hundred per year and possibly as high as several thousand. Total Portuguese trafficking figures for the period from 1450 to 1520 are likely to be well over 150,000 individuals.[4]

Both Spain and Portugal had a longer history of contact with Africa and from the eighth century onwards some Africans had entered Iberia, not only as enslaved people but also as conquerors, part of the Moorish invasion and occupation of what became known as al-Andalus. Once called 'Africa's kingdom in Europe', al-Andalus at one time included all of modern Spain and Portugal, as well as parts of France.[5] Such was the power and splendour of these African Muslim rulers, that in the early thirteenth century England's King John was reported to have sent a delegation seeking an alliance with Caliph Muhammad an-Nāsir, even proposing his own conversion to Islam. The caliph contemptuously rejected such overtures.[6] In fact, the modern history of both Spain and Portugal, including their overseas expansion, was forged during their attempts to expel these Muslim occupiers. Historians estimate that Africans comprised at least 5 per cent of the total population of Portugal in the sixteenth century and at least 10 per cent of the population of its capital, Lisbon. Significant numbers of Africans also resided in Spain. In the period from 1445 to 1516, records suggest the arrival of more than 6,000 enslaved Africans into the Spanish port of Valencia and that Africans may have numbered 10 per cent of the total population of Seville.[7]

A few English merchants based in Spain in the late fifteenth century were human traffickers and owners of enslaved Africans based in that country and in some of its newly acquired colonies. However, there is no evidence at present that they extended their trafficking and ownership of enslaved Africans to England during that early period, although it is likely that at least a few Africans reached England from that source. It is also likely that the practice of keeping African domestic servants may have originated in Spain and Portugal before spreading to England. We know that some Africans arrived in England in the late fifteenth century, such as the 'Black man that was a taboryn', a drummer, said to be the victim of an assault in Southampton in 1491 or 1492.[8] Another example from Southampton is that of the young African woman, Maria Moriana, who arrived with her Italian employer from Venice some time before 1470. In that year, her employer 'hatched

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a base plot to have her sold' to another Italian in Southampton. The precise nature of Maria's status is unknown. What is known is that she spoke no English, or Latin, and it seems that this led her employer to try to exploit her and make her sign a document she could not read. Once she was made aware of her predicament, she spoke up to demand her rights, which were subsequently upheld by the authorities.[9] This case appears to show how difficult it was to establish the institution of slavery in England in the late fifteenth century. A century later, in 1587, there was a legal case in which the 'owner' of an enslaved African unsuccessfully asked the court to compel the enslaved African to serve him, or to force the trafficker to refund his money. The court was unable, or unwilling, to take either course.[10]

It seems likely that these early African arrivals in England came from Spain and Portugal, or, like Maria, from southern Europe.[11] Some were referred to as Moriscos, a term used in Spain for those Muslims forced to convert to Christianity, some of whom were expelled from Spain. It is probable that some of these Africans made their way to Tudor England.[12] However, exactly where Africans came from and exactly who brought them to Britain remain questions to be more fully answered. At present, what we know is something of the lives and circumstances of Africans living in England and Scotland during this period. It is certainly possible that some were brought as enslaved people but it appears that it was not a status that could be easily, nor legally, maintained.

By the late sixteenth century English involvement in the trafficking, or seizing, of Africans had increased, largely as a consequence of England's economic difficulties, its conflict with Spain and the enthusiasm for privateering, or plundering the goods of enemy merchants (which was organized with full government support). This was also the period of England's overseas expansion, following the principles of mercantilism, which sought the amassing of national monetary wealth based largely on the acquisition of gold and silver bullion, and also, in England's case, by the development of exports, particularly of woollen cloth. It led to English merchants seeking new overseas markets and necessitated the construction of a national navy.

Mercantilism also contributed to a growing rivalry with foreign competitors, such as Spain, and the looting of their shipping. Spanish

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ships often carried Africans on board and, as part of their looting, some Africans might have been re-kidnapped and transported back to England. In 1601, it was reported in the proclamation of the Privy Council that 'great numbers of Negroes and blackamoors . . . are carried into this realm of England since the troubles between her highness and the King of Spain'.[13] Some historians have argued that Africans brought to England in these circumstances were the victims of human trafficking, at least in Europe, and that these circumstances provide the context for the infamous Privy Council warrants of 1596 and 1601 that appear to demand the rounding up of Africans and their transportation abroad.[14] However, it is unlikely that the English were engaged in large-scale trafficking in this period, although they were making increasing efforts to do so. The numbers of enslaved Africans transported to the Americas by English traffickers before 1580 are estimated at about one thousand and, in the next sixty years, about 4,000. It is only after 1640 that the numbers rise dramatically.[15]

By the late sixteenth century England was also in direct contact with the African continent, including what is today's South Africa. Diplomatic and economic relations had been established between Elizabeth Tudor and Morocco and there was a Moroccan embassy in London. By 1600 English merchants and seafarers had also established links with some kingdoms in West Africa, where they began to develop a trade in ivory, pepper and gold. As early as 1558, the first year of Elizabeth Tudor's reign, the Guinea Company was granted a royal monopoly of trade with West Africa for ten years. Links with West Africa led to the ruler of at least one African state sending his son to England to be educated in the early seventeenth century and thus begin a tradition of wealthy Africans educating their children, and especially sons, in Britain, a tradition which has continued ever since. After 1531, English adventurers such as William Hawkins, his son John Hawkins, Thomas Wyndham, John Lok and others made numerous sailing voyages to Africa, some of them clandestinely, and it is evident that some Africans began to arrive in England as a result.[16] John Hawkins began his human-trafficking activities in 1562. Elizabeth Tudor is supposed to have warned him that 'if any Africans should be carried away without their free consent, it would be detestable, and call down the vengeance of Heaven upon the undertakers', but it is difficult to imagine she did

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not know the nature of his maritime activities.[17] Clearly the monarch had the capacity to investigate further before heavily investing in such activities. Elizabeth Tudor, like many monarchs who succeeded her, was engaged in the human trafficking of Africans.

In 1555, the English merchant John Lok returned with five African men from Sharma, a town in what is now Ghana in West Africa. It seems that the men were kidnapped but there is no evidence that they were transported as slaves.[18] One was the son of 'the captain' of the town and the others are reported as bringing gold with them. The names of three of these men are recorded as Anthonie, Binne and George, which perhaps suggests that two of them were baptized. Contemporary reports describe them as tall and strong men who 'coulde well agree with owr meates and drynkes' although 'the coulde and moyst ayer dooth sumwhat offende them'.[19] Three of the five returned to Africa after about one year in London, so it seems likely that they were taken as emissaries and to learn something of the ways and language of the English, so that they could facilitate further trading relations. One of the Africans is even reported to have married an English woman.[20]

Other Africans, such as Walter Annerby, the son of an important official in the West African kingdom of Dungala, were sent to England for similar purposes during this period, or simply to broaden their minds. Annerby was also baptized during his visit in London in 1610.[21] These tourists included 'two chief young Negroes . . . sons to the chief justice of that country' brought to London in 1592.[22] In this instance the idea that the Africans had travelled of their own free will was questioned in the Admiralty Court. It was decided that the men had come 'by consent of their friends to see the country'.[23] Other Africans clearly were kidnapped, including the South African known as Coree, brought to England by the East India Company in 1613, but returned to his homeland the following year. In this case, it appears that Coree returned with an increased knowledge of English goods and trading practices that was somewhat to the detriment of the East India Company, established by royal charter in 1600 to expand England's trade east of the Cape of Good Hope.[24]

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BLACK TUDORS

Thanks to the work of modern historians, we now have sufficient evidence to conclude that most Africans who lived in England and Scotland in the sixteenth century were not enslaved.[25] Historians have discovered records showing that there were well over 300 Africans living in Britain in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, in large towns and cities such as London, Plymouth and Barnstable, but also in much smaller towns and villages such as Blean in Kent. Some may have been brought to the country in service, or in servile status, probably from Europe rather than directly from Africa, but the majority were in paid employment of various kinds. There were 'Black Tudors' in the households of Sir Walter Raleigh, Robert Dudley (Earl of Leicester), the Earl of Northumberland, and William Cecil (Lord Burghley). Africans were employed as gardeners, cooks, laundresses and other types of domestic servants in the homes of aristocrats and other wealthy individuals.[26] Sir Francis Drake was even accompanied by an African man named Diego on his famous voyage of circumnavigation.[27]

Others were independent craftsmen such as the silk weaver Reasonable Blackman and the African needle-maker who prudently maintained a monopoly of his craft, of whom we shall hear more later on. Most Africans appear to have been male, but some were women and there are also a few examples of African men and women marrying, such as the trumpeter Anthonie Vause and his wife Anne, whose burial in 1618 is recorded.[28] It was, however, more common for relationships to be established between Africans and English people, both inside and outside marriage. Such 'mixed' relationships are nothing new.[29] We also have evidence, especially during the sixteenth century, of Africans and those of African descent being born and raised in the British Isles, such as the 'baseborn blackamoore', christened at St Margaret's, Westminster, in 1595.[30] Reasonable Blackman, an African 'silk-weaver', an independent craftsman with a new and much sought-after skill, lived in London's Southwark with a wife and children. The records show both the baptism and deaths of three of his children, although the origin of his wife is unknown.[31] There is also evidence

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that some sixty Africans converted to Christianity.[32] Others may have lived in England for a considerable time, such as 'Anthony, a poore ould Negro aged 105', who died in Hackney, London, in 1630.[33]

Two of the recorded baptisms in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries are of young women. There was Marye Fillis, described as 'a Blackamore', about twenty years of age, the daughter of an African basket-and-shovel-maker baptized in London in June 1597, who was probably from Spain and worked for a seamstress, and Julyane, 'a blackamore servant' who was twenty-two years old when she was baptized in 1601. The young women may have been encouraged to be baptized by employers, or others, as was the custom of the times in a devout society. Clearly there was no impediment to them doing so in the same manner as everyone else.

These as well as other records relating to London suggest that there were a significant number of female African residents, mothers, wives and daughters during this period.[34] At one time historians suggested that significant numbers of African women worked as prostitutes during this period but there seems to be very little evidence to substantiate this view. The only known prostitute was Anne Cobbie, described as a 'tawny Moor' working in a well-known brothel in London and noted for her 'soft skin'. She enters the historical records because of the court case brought against the owners of the brothel in 1625.[35] Other African women lived outside the main towns and cities and there are a few records of those who lived in rural Suffolk, Somerset and Gloucestershire. An African 'singlewoman' named Cattalena is recorded as living in Almondsbury, a village near Bristol, in the early seventeenth century. At the time of her death in 1625 her most valuable possession was a cow and, besides a few domestic items and clothes, she owned little else. However, her possessions were valued at over £6 (three months' wages for a skilled craftsman) and this, and the fact that they were recorded, show that she was self-supporting and independent, and recognized as such by the local authorities.[36]

The general view of Africans and Europeans appears to have been that slavery did not exist in Tudor England. For example, Diogo, an African taken to England in 1614, later reported that when he set foot on English soil 'he immediately became free, because in that Reign nobody is a slave'.[37] Africans in Tudor England gave evidence in court

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and this is generally seen as a sign that they were not enslaved. In later centuries, enslaved Africans in Britain's North American and Caribbean colonies were prevented from testifying in legal matters. However, in Britain, even in the eighteenth century, when the status of African servants was more often contested, it was not uncommon for those brought to the country with an enslaved status to give evidence in court.[38] In a court case in 1587, in London, a Portuguese doctor even complained that he had bought an 'Ethiopian' from an English mariner but that the African 'utterly refused to tarry and serve' him. He asked the court to assist in the recovery of the cost of the transaction, which was refused, since the institution of slavery was not sanctioned in English law.[39] As long ago as 1490, English law and custom seems to have opposed the institution of slavery. In that year, an African known as Pedro Alvarez obtained his freedom from Henry VII. Alvarez had previously lived in Portugal, where he was described as a slave. Whatever his former status, he was not only free in England but was able to maintain his new liberated status which was recognized when he returned to Portugal.[40]

AFRICANS AT COURT

The best known of those Africans living and working in England in the Tudor period is the 'blacke trumpet', as he was called, a trumpeter at court who we now know as John Blanke. It is generally assumed that the name was something of an 'ironic jest', the irony being that *blanc* in French means white. Whatever the case, Blanke is twice pictured on a horse in the Westminster Tournament Roll of 1511, which illustrated a royal procession and was created to celebrate the birth of a son to Catherine of Aragon and Henry VIII. His is the first illustration of an identifiable African for many centuries and he has therefore become widely celebrated.[41] Blanke is shown wearing a turban, and again historians have speculated as to the reason for this headgear; some suggesting that it was to cover his African hair, others that it relates to his religious beliefs, or was simply the fashion.[42] There is similar speculation that Blanke may have accompanied Catherine of Aragon to England as part of her entourage in 1501, but there is no

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evidence to support this view. What we do know is that he was the first recorded African wage earner in Britain, paid 8d a day (the wage of a skilled craftsman) by Henry VII in late 1507 and that he continued to receive regular payments throughout 1508. He therefore occupied something of a privileged position, since he enjoyed not only a regular wage, but also board and lodging and a clothing allowance and was paid at a rate that was significantly greater than most servants or workers. In 1509, when Henry VII died, John Blanke continued to be employed at court. The records show that he attended both the funeral of the late king and the coronation of Henry VIII and was given appropriate livery for both occasions. It is also recorded that John Blanke petitioned the new king for higher wages, in fact for a doubling of wages, a request that proved successful and perhaps tells us something about his status. We know little more about his life. The last report we have indicates that he married in 1512 and was presented with a wedding gown by the king.[43]

It seems likely that John Blanke entered England from Spain, where many Africans were to be found both as a result of the North African occupation of Spain, which had recently been brought to an end, and the beginnings of Spain's involvement in the transatlantic trafficking of Africans that commenced in the mid-fifteenth century. One of Catherine of Aragon's retinue was an African woman from Motril, in the kingdom of Granada, called Catalina, who acted in the important position of 'lady of the bed-chamber', and came to England with Catherine in 1501. Indeed, it seems quite possible that several of Catherine's retinue were African women. According to an eyewitness account by Sir Thomas More, 'except for three or four of them, they were not much to look at: hunchbacked, undersized, barefoot pygmy Ethiopians'.[44] Historians have been reluctant to accept that this account provides evidence of African ladies-in-waiting. Catalina is known to have been of Moorish origin and so it is quite possible that Thomas More was reporting exactly what he had seen in a derogatory way, four young African women, perhaps wearing sandals. Catalina assumed much more importance when she was sought as an expert witness many years later to testify that Catherine of Aragon had entered her marriage as a virgin. This was at the time when Henry VIII was attempting to dissolve his marriage, and when Catalina had

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already returned and spent many years in Spain as the wife of a Moorish crossbow-maker named Oviedo.[45]

Some historians consider that Catalina had been an enslaved woman when she entered Britain, although the evidence is far from conclusive. It is even possible that she was of noble birth but had a servile status imposed upon her resulting from the conquest of Muslim Granada by Christian Spain in 1492. What *is* clear is that such enslavement was not a status that had any legal sanction in England at the time, although slavery did exist in Spain and Portugal. Even a century later this seems to have been the case, as the Portuguese doctor mentioned above lamented the fact that he 'hath not an ordinarye remedie at and by the course of the common Lawes' and could not compel the 'Ethiopian' to serve as his slave.[46] Historians have concluded from this incident that there was an absence of a specific law on slavery in England; that even if Africans were brought to the country as slaves from abroad, it might have been difficult for their owners to maintain that servile status.

Although some records describe Africans as 'belonging' to their masters, this might not denote enslavement. It seems likely that slave status only affected a very small number of people and the evidence points towards an African population that was overwhelmingly free. During the Tudor period, England had no overseas colonies reliant on slave labour and was for most of the century unable to compete with Spain's and Portugal's domination of the lucrative trafficking of Africans across the Atlantic. The royal tradition of employing Africans at court may have continued with Katherine's daughter Mary Tudor and her half-sister, Elizabeth. Mary Tudor employed an African known as Fraunces Negro in the royal stables. Elizabeth Tudor kept a 'little black a More', an African child, at her court, since records show that during the 1570s she ordered two suits of clothes to be specially made for him by the royal tailors.[47]

AFRICANS IN SCOTLAND

Africans were also popular at the Scottish court of James IV. He directly employed seven African men and women, who included drummers

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and dancers, although royal accounts mention African children in Edinburgh, Dunfermline and elsewhere as well. Peter the More, or Moryen, and Margaret and Elen More were part of the retinue of Margaret Stewart, James IV's daughter.[48] These Africans may have been seized from the Portuguese by Scottish privateers. According to one report, attacks on Portuguese ships returning from Africa led to the 'unwonted appearance of blackamoors at the Scottish court, and sable empresses presiding over the royal tournaments'.[49] Or perhaps these 'blackamoors' made their way to Scotland by other means. What is significant is that whatever their former status was they were now paid employees or retainers and, it seems, highly regarded.

Peter the More not only received regular wages but also had his travel costs, clothes and lodgings paid by the crown. He was given permission by the king to travel freely throughout the kingdom and even to France, where his expenses were paid.[50] Similar payments are recorded for 'the More lassis', both for travel and servants, and even for a baptism ceremony for one of the young women in 1504. It is evident that some of the Africans at court were children and the king even made payment for a nurse for an African baby. In 1507, the king made financial provision on several occasions for his 'More taubronar' (African drummer), as well as his wife and child. The drummer had clothing, transport and other expenses paid on his behalf, including medical care.[51] In 1508 the king also made living expenses available for two African friars.[52]

Moreover, Africans at the Scottish court were part of significant ceremonies. In 1507 and 1508, the Scottish king himself took part in jousting tournaments for the favour of the 'Black Queen of Beauty', who it is thought was one of the African women at court. The tournaments were accompanied by sumptuous banquets lasting three days at the court at Holyrood House, during which the 'black lady' was also the centre of attention. The position of Africans at the Scottish court, which seems to have been one of respect, to judge from the financial records, has been thrown in doubt by the existence of William Dunbar's poem 'Ane Blak Moir', which appears to be openly racist, since it makes derogatory remarks about the physical appearance of an African woman, and suggests that she was the victim of sexual assaults. But the evidence shows that even in this instance the

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African woman was dressed expensively and had two female attendants.[53] The accounts record that she 'was arrayed in a gown of damask flowered with gold, trimmed with green and yellow taffety; she had sleeves and gloves of black "semys" leather, and the sleeves were themselves covered with "pleasance," of which material she also had a kerchief about her arm . . . She road in state in a "chair triumphal" covered with Flemish taffety, one hundred and sixty ells of this stuff – white, yellow, purple, green and gray [sic] having been purchased in Flanders at a costs of £88.'[54] Whatever the exact circumstances, the financial records and the poem are yet further evidence of the significant presence of African women at the Scottish court. Records of payments to similarly highly regarded Africans at the Scottish court were made throughout the sixteenth century.[55]

STUDENTS AND WORKERS

On New Year's Day 1611, Prince Dederi Jaquoah was baptized as John Jaquoah at St Mildred's Poultry in east London. Jaquoah was the son of a minor king in today's Liberia, and was about twenty years old at the time. He had journeyed to England on the return voyage of John Davies, a London merchant and haberdasher, the previous year. Jaquoah had been sent by his father King Caddi-biah to be baptized and remained in London for two years. He lived with Davies and his wife and evidently made an impact in London. One scholar has even suggested that Shakespeare was inspired by his father's name to name one of his characters Caliban, in *The Tempest*, first performed at the end of 1611.[56]

It is quite likely that between Dederi's father and Davies there was the expectation that he would be educated during his stay in London and would act as a useful intermediary in the growing trade relations between West Africa and Britain. Such trade may have included pepper, ivory and gold, but it may also have included human trafficking.[57] In this fashion began a tradition for West African notables to send at least one of their children overseas to learn the ways of their trading partners. Why Dederi, the 'king's son from Guinea' and his father, should desire to become Christian, can only be a matter of speculation.[58] It was

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not unusual for African rulers in contact with Europeans to adopt the names, religion and even dress of their partners, perhaps as a form of diplomacy.

The hundreds of Africans residing in England in the sixteenth century were employed in a variety of occupations. Perhaps the most important of these African workers was the unnamed African living in Cheapside, London in the mid-sixteenth century. He was reported to have been a craftsman 'making fine Spanish needles . . . but would never teach his art to any'. This African craftsman is thought to have introduced the art of making fine steel needles in England.[59] African workers also include Jacques Francis, who was a head diver, employed as part of a team of Africans divers to salvage the wreck of Henry VIII's flagship, *Mary Rose*. He became one of the first Africans to give evidence in court and his testimony has been preserved in the records of the Admiralty High Court. We can conclude from his court appearance as a witness and from other records that Francis was a free man, although there were efforts by the prosecution to cast doubt on the right of an African to testify. There were allegations that he was a 'morisco', a Spanish term sometimes used to describe a Muslim convert to Christianity, an infidel and 'commonly reputed' to be a slave. The High Court appears to have accepted that Francis, who was born on an island off the coast of Mauritania, was a man able to freely present evidence, a wage earner, not one bound to a master.[60]

Francis was based in Southampton and was about eighteen when he was first employed as a diver by a Venetian salvager living in that city. We do not know how he arrived in England, although it is likely that he came via Spain, Italy or Portugal, which had the largest African populations in Europe at the time. When he gave evidence in court on behalf of his employer in February 1548, he required an interpreter, but it is not known what language he spoke. Of his diving ability, there is no doubt. He had aquatic skills that most people in England did not possess and probably led the team of divers.

Several other Africans were employed as sailors during the Elizabethan period and probably before then too, as we have seen that at least one of Drake's crew, who was perhaps also his navigator, interpreter and oral historian, was Diego, an African. He served with Drake during his circumnavigation voyage and after, until his death in

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1579.[61] The rapid expansion of the royal navy and privateering, as well as closer links with Africa and the Americas, led to an increase in the employment of African mariners, some of whom were also pirates. Some Africans may have been captured on board Spanish ships raided by the English. In the early seventeenth century, African sailors such as John Anthony and John Phillip both served with Sir Henry Mainwaring, a former pirate. Anthony, who was for some years based in Dover, has entered the historical records because in 1619 he successfully petitioned for the payment of outstanding wages, a clear sign of his status.[62]

Another of the Africans living in England in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries was Henrie Anthonie Jetto (c.1596–1627). Nothing is known of his parentage but he was described as a 'Blackamore'. He was initially employed as a gardener but, by the time he wrote his will in 1626, one of the first Africans to do so, he had the status of a man of property, was a yeoman of Worcestershire, and a married man with several children. As a yeoman, Jetto would have been a landowner who had voting rights and perhaps other political rights and responsibilities too.[63]

THE STATUS OF AFRICANS IN ENGLAND

Towards the end of the reign of Elizabeth Tudor, the Privy Council issued three documents relating to the standing of Africans in England. In July 1596, the Privy Council drafted an 'open letter' to the mayor and aldermen of London and to all other mayors and sheriffs claiming that Elizabeth Tudor's understanding was that 'there are of late divers Blackmoores brought into the Realme, of which kinde of persons there are all ready here to manie'. The queen apparently believed that population increase and 'to manie' Blackmooores led to unemployment and therefore 'that those kinde of people should be sent forth of the land'. The letter concludes by giving authority to a certain Edward Banes to transport out of England only 'those Blackmoores that in this last voyage under Sir Thomas Baskerville were brought into this Realme to the number of Tenn'. Although the 'open

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letter' is signed by the queen, there is no evidence that its demands were implemented. Its main historical importance is that it suggests that 'divers Blackmoores' were being brought into England, most likely as a result of England's wars with Spain and the activities of Baskerville and his associates, and the fact that some considered that there were 'to manie' of 'those kinde of people'.[64]

A few days after the first letter, there was a second, this time an 'open warrant' addressed to the Lord Mayor of London, along with 'all other vyce admeralles', mayors and public officers. This warrant, issued by the Privy Council, empowered a merchant from Lubeck, Caspar Van Senden, to 'take up so many Blackamoores here in this Realme and to transport them into Spaine and Portugall'. The aim of Van Senden appears to have been either to sell African residents abroad to defray the costs he had incurred liberating English prisoners-of-war, or to exchange them for these prisoners. But the 'open warrant' had added the stipulation that Africans residing in England could only be taken 'with consent of their masters', in other words with the agreement of their employers. Since most were trusted servants and retainers, often with scarce skills, this agreement was never likely to be given. Van Senden later reported that he had travelled throughout the kingdom on a doomed mission since 'the masters of them, perceiving by the said warrant that your orator could not take the Blackamoores without the master's good will, would not suffer your orator to have any one of them'.[65]

This royal edict, too, was doomed to failure. Rather than necessarily expressing the views of Elizabeth Tudor, the 'open warrant' shows something of the machinations of Van Senden and those in the Privy Council.[66] Once again its main significance is to demonstrate the presence of significant numbers of Africans in Britain and that their employers would not part with them. This letter too presents the view that the large numbers of Africans in England may be preventing other Christian subjects from finding employment and encourages employers to favour 'their own countrymen' rather than 'those kynde of people', in other words, Africans. However, the evidence shows that they did not and no Africans were transported by Van Senden.

A few years later, in 1601, there was a further draft of a royal proclamation expressing the view that Queen Elizabeth was 'highly

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discontented to understand the great numbers of Negroes and blackmoores which (as she is informed) are carried into this realm since the troubles between her highness and the King of Spain; who are fostered and powered here to the great annoyance of her own liege people'. Again, the queen commanded Van Senden to transport the Africans, especially because they were 'infidels', out of her realm. This proclamation added that if anyone had 'possession' of these Africans and refused to deliver them to Van Senden their names should be given to the Queen so that she 'may take further course therein as it shall seem best in her princely wisdom'.[67]

This proclamation is a draft. It was no more successfully implemented than previous documents drafted by the Privy Council and appears to be a rather feeble response to petitions by Van Senden's dubious patrons there. It contains several interesting references, specifically to the period of the Anglo-Spanish War (1585–1604) and has a particular concern with non-Christians, who were apparently consuming 'the relief' provided for the Queen's subjects. There were clearly those who had such views but there is no evidence that Elizabeth Tudor held them. Most importantly, they were not implemented and, as is evident from the Privy Council's open letter of 1596, could not be.

It used to be thought that these documents and proclamations were official efforts to expel Africans from England. Historians have presented differing views as to how they should be interpreted.[68] The view that they refer to mass expulsions and state racism is now under scrutiny, but some historians have claimed that they may have indicated that human trafficking between England and Europe existed in this period.[69] However, there were no anti-African laws in Elizabethan England. The evidence suggest that Africans were treated in much the same way as all others living in England, who were not subject to feudal dues.[70]

In recent years, historians have been much less concerned with establishing an African presence in Britain in this period and rather more with discussing the status of those Africans who were present. If Africans were not slaves, what was their status and how were they viewed by their Elizabethan and Jacobean contemporaries? One view has been that Africans were perceived as unusual, exotic strangers,

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mainly of servile status, who in the records are often simply referred to by their first names, often not baptized, as their neighbours generally would have been, and clearly labelled as Blackamores, a word that seems to have first appeared in 1547, or by other similar distinctive terms.[71] This view is associated with the idea that what we would now call racism was already well established during the Reformation as exemplified in such notions as the divine 'curse of Ham' (to explain the skin colour of Africans, as presented in the writings of the Elizabethan adventurer George Best).[72] Best refers to the fact that Africans lived in Britain and reports that he has personally seen an 'Ethiopian as blacke as cole brought into England, who taking a faire English woman to wife, begat a sonne in all respects as blacke as the father was, although England were his native country and an English woman his mother'. He considered this a matter for some further investigation.[73]

Some of the interest in the presence of Africans in Tudor and Stuart England has arisen from the fact that African characters appear in the drama and writing of the time. Shakespeare's *Othello* is the most famous example, but there are others, both in his plays and the writing of his contemporaries, Thomas Kyd, Christopher Marlowe and Ben Jonson. There has also long been speculation about the identity of the 'dark lady' who is lovingly described and addressed in several of Shakespeare's sonnets. Some historians have suggested that this woman may have been someone called Lucy Negro, also known as Black Luce, a brothel keeper from Clerkenwell, London. However, it not certain that the women described in Shakespeare's sonnet was African, or of African heritage. In Sonnet 130 she is described with the lines 'If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun; if hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head', hardly a conclusive description. Moreover, Lucy Negro is never described in any of the records as a Blackamoore, or even as a Negro, so there is no conclusive evidence from those sources either.[74]

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Some historians have argued that even the names used to describe Africans contain a hidden negativity, a 'racialization process because it essentializes a physical attribute'.[75] However, more recently such

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views have been brought into question by the possibility that Africans were perceived as a normal part of Elizabethan and Jacobean society. They worked in a variety of occupations, lived in towns and villages throughout England and Scotland and intermarried, or had sexual relations, with their British contemporaries. They were subject to no special laws and had a very similar status to their neighbours.[76]

Africans who lived in England and Scotland during Tudor and Stuart times were known by several descriptive terms. Blackamoore, spelt in various ways, is perhaps the most common, but other terms such as Negro, Moor, Black, Aethiopian, Morisco, were also employed and in some cases may even have been suggested, or used, by Africans to describe themselves.[77] Historians now consider that these terms were applied to Africans without any particular derogatory connotations. Certainly, people in Europe were interested in the fact that Africans had a different skin colour to their own, that this colour was transferred to children even when they did not live in a tropical climate and might even be transferred to children born of European women. However, in this period modern notions of racism had not yet been developed, especially in England. An African might sometimes be described as 'a stranger', indicating that they were foreign-born, but in other respects Africans appear to have been generally treated as other residents and subjects of the monarch.

As England's and Europe's relationship with Africa and Africans became increasingly exploitative, so too the status of Africans, and the way that they were referred to, underwent a significant change. The history of Africans in the British Isles is therefore an important one, not only in its own right but also because it may help us more fully to understand the source and nature of modern racism. That racism developed as a consequence of the human trafficking of Africans that began in England with Hawkins' first voyage of 1562 and the transportation of hundreds of enslaved Africans from their homeland to the Caribbean.

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3
That Infamous Traffic

In the early seventeenth century England's global expansion entered a new phase with the acquisition of overseas colonies. In 1609, English adventurers occupied Bermuda in the Caribbean and, soon afterwards, Virginia and Massachusetts in North America. In 1625 Barbados was seized and by 1632 England had also occupied the Caribbean islands of Antigua, Nevis and Montserrat. The seizure of such important overseas possessions necessarily demanded a supply of labour so that they might be fully exploited. By 1619 English settlers began importing enslaved Africans into the newly acquired North American colonies, and then to England's Caribbean possessions. England's human traffickers also began consolidating their position in West Africa, so as to more effectively enslave members of the local population.

The English mariner Richard Jobson declared in 1620 that the English were a people 'who did not deale' in slaves, 'neither did wee buy or sell one another, or any that had our own shapes (sic)', but he expressed an increasingly old-fashioned and erroneous view.[1] England certainly did deal in enslaved Africans, but, when possible, would also send indentured labourers, convicts, political prisoners and other undesirables from the British Isles, especially from Ireland, to colonies in the Caribbean and elsewhere. This led to the seventeenth-century expression to 'barbadoes' a person. As early as 1617 a Puritan writer noted that what he referred to as 'slavish' servants were 'perpetually put under the power of the master as blackamores are with us'.[2] This supply of labour from the British Isles was, however, insufficient to meet the demands of what soon became large-scale crop production in an increasingly capital-centred economy.[3] As early as 1642 the English

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cleric and writer Henry Fuller presented the following amongst the characteristics of a 'good sea-captain', suggesting that the kidnapping of Africans was already commonplace:

> In taking a prize, he most prizeth the man's lives whom he takes, – Though some of them may chance to be Negroes or savages. It is the custom of some to cast them overboard, and there is an end of them: for the dumb fishes will tell no tales. But the murder is not so soon drowned as the men. What, is a brother by false blood no kin? A savage hath God to his Father by creation, though not the church to his mother; and God will revenge his innocent blood. But our captain counts the image of God, nevertheless, his image cut in ebony as if done in ivory; and in the blackest Moors he sees the representation of the King of heaven.[4]

Enslaved African labour was evidently more plentiful and more profitable than European labour. Nevertheless, as Eric Williams, the famous Caribbean historian on the subject, concluded, 'white servitude was the historic base upon which Negro slavery was constructed'.[5]

Following the introduction of sugar production in the newly acquired colonies, especially those in the Caribbean, the demand for enslaved African labour soared and soon became the major preoccupation of the English abroad. This was particularly the case in 1655 when England, under Cromwell's leadership, seized Jamaica from Spain. Several state monopolies were then established to conduct the trafficking of Africans to the new colonies, the best known being the Company of Royal Adventurers Trading in Africa, established after the restoration of the monarchy in 1663, and the Royal Africa Company established in 1672. It seems likely that in the period before 1662 England's human traffickers had already transported at least 100,000 Africans away from their homeland. In the ten years following that date at least 10,000 more Africans each year suffered the same fate.[6] The wealth that flowed from this great crime and the 'Africa trade' led to the creation of a new coin, the golden 'guinea', first minted in 1663 with African gold and afterwards stamped with the elephant and castle, the crest of the Royal Africa Company.

The Stuarts retained the same interest in human trafficking as their predecessors. The Duke of York, the brother of the monarch, became

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the first president of the Company of Royal Adventurers Trading in Africa (the royal monopoly established for the trafficking of Africans in 1660), while Charles Stuart and many of those close to the royal family were its main investors. So too were many others, including the diarist Samuel Pepys and the philosopher John Locke.[7] When the Royal Africa Company was formed, the Duke of York became its first governor and no less than fifteen lord mayors of London were amongst its early shareholders, as was Locke, who was yet to embrace his later defence of 'original liberty'.[8] In 1677 'several members' of the Royal Africa Company asked for a legal opinion as to whether human trafficking was in keeping with the Navigation Acts, mercantilist laws which required all trade to be carried out in British ships. The Solicitor-General reassured them that 'Negroes ought to be esteemed goods and commodities within the Acts of Trade and Navigation', thus dehumanizing Africans in the process.[9]

The new business of Great Britain, formed by the Act of Union in 1707, was human trafficking, and it provided the backdrop for the most popular novel of the period, Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), as well as the main source of the hero's eventual wealth. Great Britain's emergence into the world was inextricably linked to its role as a major human trafficker and slaving power. The creation of the Bank of England and the National Debt, in 1694, were the necessary means for raising the finance for carrying out the trade and colonial wars of the later seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, waged mainly against France. By 1713 these wars led to the famous Treaty of Utrecht, by which Britain secured Gibraltar from Spain, but even more importantly secured the *asiento* to supply Spain's American colonies with enslaved Africans. Queen Anne even boasted of the fact that 'I have insisted and obtained that the asiento or contract to supply the Spanish West Indies with Negroes shall be made with us for thirty years.'[10] The government promptly sold the rights for £7.5 million to the South Sea Company, an early and ultimately unsuccessful rival to the Bank of England, whose first governor was also employed as the Chancellor of the Exchequer.[11]

Between 1721 and 1730 British ships carried some 181,000 enslaved African men, women and children to the American continent. From 1701 to 1807 it is estimated that British ships transported

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2.5 million enslaved Africans to the Americas, which means the traffickers were responsible for the deaths of millions more than that number, including those lost at sea and those killed in the course of violent kidnapping in Africa.[12] Britain dominated human trafficking in the eighteenth century and was responsible for a third of all African men, women and children forcibly transported across the Atlantic. By the end of that century, British ships not only supplied enslaved Africans to Britain's colonies in the Caribbean and North America, but also to the Spanish and Portuguese colonies and even to those of its major rival, France.

The slave system therefore cannot be separated from every aspect of Britain's economy and society in the eighteenth century. It is sometimes referred to as the 'triangular trade', denoting the three separate voyages from Britain to Africa, across the Atlantic from Africa to the Americas, and then the final side of the triangle from the American continent back to Britain. Each side of the triangle could produce a profit for those who had invested in this great crime against humanity. The 'trade' supplied the luxury items that defined the age – sugar, tobacco and coffee. This created the conditions for the emergence of the coffee houses where global trade was conducted and on occasion enslaved Africans were publicly sold. Lloyds of London began as a coffee house and was involved in insuring slave ships and their cargo, as well as Caribbean plantations. It was also advertised as a location in London where absconding enslaved Africans might be returned to those who claimed to be their owners.[13]

Profits from the 'trade' fuelled the development of banking, as well as insurance, since credit was vital for the expansion of all forms of human trafficking and related industries. The Bank of England and its first directors were all involved in financing and profiting from human trafficking, therefore establishing the financial system which enabled it and Britain's empire to expand. The financiers of human trafficking were also based in Liverpool, which emerged as the greatest port in the world for this crime in the eighteenth century, and established the Heywood Bank in 1773 (later part of Barclays Bank) to advance their interests. Barclays Bank dates from 1736, started by members of the same family, many of whom were connected with slavery, not just through banking, but also trafficking and the ownership of plantations.[14] Most modern

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banks can trace their history to this period and the financing of slavery and human trafficking.

The 'trade' produced great wealth, both from human trafficking itself, the plantation system and the slave production of luxury items, as well as the production in Britain of all the means to continue the slave system, for example, ships, guns, and all the other goods to be exchanged for human beings. Human trafficking usually realized almost 10 per cent in annual profits despite widespread rebellions and resistance from enslaved Africans. It inevitably produced a 'state of war' between the enslaved and enslavers, as Equiano later called it, and in the Caribbean a '200 Years' War' of liberation.[15] The maritime nature of human trafficking created the possibility for the expansion of shipbuilding and related industries, not least the development of the textile industry, but also the production of manacles and other instruments of torture, as well as the production of firearms. Then there was the production of all those items used to exchange for human captives, from alcohol to iron bars. As Eric Williams explained, 'it was finance from the West Indian trade that financed James Watt and the steam engine.'[16] More recent research has established that James Watt and other members of his immediate family were directly engaged in human trafficking and slavery, and in 1762 even imported to Britain a young enslaved boy, known as Frederick, who soon liberated himself from enslavement. Although James Watt later condemned slavery, his family's business interests continued to profit from it even in the nineteenth century.[17]

The Watt family's connection with human trafficking and slavery is hardly surprising, as there was little in eighteenth-century Britain that was untouched by it. The Church of England had numerous connections with the slave system, most notably through the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, which owned the Codrington plantations in Barbados and some 300 enslaved African men, women and children. The governing body of the 'Society', which branded this word onto the bodies of enslaved Africans with a red-hot iron, was headed by the Archbishop of Canterbury. In 1760 he complained to one of his colleagues, 'I have long wondered and lamented that the Negroes in our plantation decrease & new supplies become necessary continually. Surely this proceeds from some Defect, both of Humanity, and even of good policy. But we must take things as they

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are at present.'[18] Many of Britain's stately homes and country houses were directly financed from the profits that accrued from this great crime, a fact that is increasingly being recognized by such bodies as the National Trust and Historic England.[19] One of the most notable is Harewood House in Yorkshire, one of the 'treasure houses of England' built between 1759 and 1771 for the Lascelles family who made their fortune from enslaved Africans in the Caribbean. Some infamous human traffickers, such as Bristol's Edward Colston, a leading figure in the Royal Africa Company, even became noted for their philanthropy.[20] Others, such as Thomas Guy, the founder of Guy's Hospital, were major investors in the South Sea Company and made fortunes from its involvement in human trafficking, or found themselves bankrupt when it collapsed. In 1720 over 500 members of both Houses of Parliament were shareholders in the South Sea Company, so too the royal family, Kings College, Cambridge, and the poet Alexander Pope.[21]

London was the first port to grow rich from human trafficking, for many years enjoying a monopoly position. In the mid-eighteenth century its dominance was challenged by Bristol and then by Liverpool, which began regular trafficking voyages in the early eighteenth century. Indeed, both Liverpool and Bristol were champions of 'free trade', successfully arguing that they too should participate in human trafficking.[22] By the 1740s Liverpool surpassed both of its rivals and by 1795 slave ships from Liverpool constituted the majority of such ships sailing from Britain and over half of all of Europe's slave ships.[23] Liverpool became the world's most important slaving port, with one in five enslaved Africans transported across the Atlantic in its vessels, although it cannot be forgotten that other British ports were also involved, including Whitehaven, Lancaster, Chester, Preston and Glasgow.[24]

It is estimated that in the eighteenth century the port of Liverpool employed more than 3,000 shipwrights, alongside many other ancillary producers of ropes, guns and other provisions. The triangular trade based in Liverpool also provided employment for the emerging industries of Lancashire and Yorkshire, the producers of textiles, brass, metalware, alcohol and other commodities. Human trafficking accounted for some 40 per cent of Liverpool's trade and employed one in eight of its population.[25] Africans were even incorporated into

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Liverpool's architecture. African heads adorned the Customs House, built in 1740, and the town hall, constructed during the 1750s.[26]

According to the eighteenth-century English economist Malachy Postlethwayte, one of the main defenders of human trafficking, 'the Negroe-Trade and the natural Consequences resulting from it, may be justly esteemed an inexhaustible Fund of Wealth and Naval Power to this Nation'.[27] Karl Marx, a nineteenth-century economist, explained the connection between slavery and the industrial revolution, 'Without slavery you have no cotton; without cotton you have no modern industry. It is slavery that gave the colonies their value; it is the colonies that created world trade, and it is world trade that is the pre-condition of large-scale industry.'[28]

AFRICANS IN THE BRITISH ISLES

It was this growing involvement in human trafficking abroad that had a significant impact on the numbers and status of Africans in England, since some of those trafficked across the Atlantic were subsequently brought to the British Isles. In 1651, the investors in the London-based Guinea Company instructed one ship's captain – 'We pray you buy fifteen or twenty lusty negers of about 15 years of age, bring them home with you to London.'[29] The gradual change in the numbers and status of Africans in England may also have had some impact on how their presence was reported. In April 1645, during the English Civil War, the *Moderate Intelligencer*, a contemporary publication, complained about some of those who gathered in 'Lincolne's Inn-fields not far from the Portugall Ambassadours house'. There, it was said,

> gathers many hundreds of men, women, maids and boys together, then comes Negars, and other of like ranks, these make sport with our English women and maids . . . why these black men should use our English maids and women upon the Lords day, or any other in that manner, we know no reason for: but the truth is the fault is wholly in those loose people that come there, and in the Officers of those Parishes where it is done.[30]

The report is an intriguing one, suggesting that a critical mass of 'black men' were now present in London and behaving in an unseemly

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manner, but blaming others for their alleged behaviour. What is perhaps even more interesting is that 'these black men' are not regarded or described as being of servile status and are clearly popular with the 'English women and maids'. The relations between African men and English women were a subject frequently commented upon in later centuries.

However, it is also clear that African women were in England too, such as the 'Blackymore mayde named Francis', a servant in Bristol. It was reported to be 'somewhat rare in our dayes and Nation to have an Ethyopian or Blackmore to be truly convinced of sin'. Francis, however, was evidently a devout Christian, for much of her life, a 'Memmorable member' of a Bristol Baptist church in the mid-seventeenth century who made much of her faith when she was about to die. Another African woman connected with the radical Baptists during the 1640s, a period of great revolutionary change in England, was 'Dinah the Black', a servant probably living in London. Dinah was also described as a 'Blakmor', and is mentioned in the memoir of Sarah Wight, a Baptist visionary of that time. Dinah appears to have been ill, both physically and mentally; she might have had difficulty reconciling Christianity with her African identity and might even have been contemplating suicide.[31] Such accounts suggest that African women and men were fully part of the religious, political and personal turmoil so typical of that revolutionary period, when the 'world might be permanently turned upside down'.[32]

The status of some African men at the time is demonstrated by the case of Martin Francis, 'a blackamoore', who took three young women to court in 1658 for attempting to defraud him of £17 – a considerable sum – by their false promises of marriage to him by one of them. Although the result of the case is unknown, it is an interesting instance of a relatively wealthy African seeking to use the law to defend his interests.[33] Perhaps Francis was a seafarer, as was John Anthony, a Dover-based mariner and former pirate. Anthony had sailed with the infamous pirate Henry Mainwaring and probably arrived in Dover in 1615, at a time when James I had ordered that further piratical activities should cease. A year later the king pardoned Mainwaring and his crew and the former was later knighted. We know that Anthony was still living in Dover in 1619, when he was

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one of the crew of the *Silver Falcon* owned by Lord Zouche, warden of the Cinque Ports and a member of Privy Council. In March 1619, Anthony had not been paid for his services and became 'indebted for his diet, lodging and washing'. He therefore petitioned Zouche and the Privy Council, 'for payment of £30 wages due to him for services onboard the ship Silver Falcon, which the mayor of Dover is ordered not to pay without warrant'. In a second petition, it was suggested 'that the money may either be paid to himself or to Sir Henry Mainwaring, his present master'. Anthony was eventually paid only 17s 6d, although apparently with 'half a year's interest'. He was one of several African seamen who were wage-earners during this period.[34]

The status of these relatively wealthy and evidently free Africans might be contrasted with that of 'a Negro boy' who was reported 'lost' in the pages of a London publication in 1659. In this instance a reward was offered for his safe return. However, what may be inferred is that the unnamed child had absconded, perhaps providing an indication of his status.[35] In this period the kidnapping of children from Africa to be used as 'pets' became fashionable. Samuel Pepys, the diarist, records how in 1662 the Earl of Sandwich returned from a trip abroad with presents for his daughters including 'a little Turke and a Negro', while a ship arriving from West Africa in 1667 carried an official, formerly based in that region, who 'brought with him a great many small blacks'.[36] Indeed Pepys records several encounters with Africans, both alive and dead, during this period. In the latter category, he mentions one associate's continued possession of 'a black boy that he had that had died of consumption; and being dead he caused him to be dried in an oven, and lies there entire in a box'.[37] It seems that Pepys was also attracted to an African woman, whom he describes as a 'comely black mayde', and that he employed at least one African woman servant.[38]

SLAVERY AND FREEDOM

What conclusions can be drawn about the status of Africans in England in the second half of the seventeenth century? Habib reports that in 1662, for the first time, an African in England, one Emanuell Feinade,

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is recorded with the unambiguous status of 'slave'.[39] Africans were initially being brought into Britain by those connected with enslavement and the Africa trade, the captains and officers of ships and those who profited from the colonies in North America and the Caribbean. Some Africans clearly had slave status when they were imported from the colonies, even if the law remained ambiguous. Others, for example those who were employed on ships, may have been free or able to exercise some elements of freedom. In this period, the best-known legal case concerned with the subject of slavery was *Butts v. Penny* in 1677. That dispute centred on whether Africans could be considered property, since the plaintiff in the case alleged that his property, a hundred Africans, had been stolen from him. The judgment in the Court of King's Bench was that 'Negroes being usually bought and sold among Merchants, and so Merchandise, and also being infidels, there might be property in them.'[40] In the same year the Solicitor-General, Sir Francis Winnington, expressed the legal opinion that 'Negroes ought to be esteemed goods and commodities within the Acts of Trade and Navigation.'[41]

The *Butts v. Penny* judgment emphasized the importance of the absence of Christian faith, but what was addressed in legal terms normally occurred outside Britain, that is, the buying and selling of enslaved Africans, so it may not say much about the status of Africans within Britain. Indeed, it highlights a legal ambiguity, that English law was increasingly required to recognize the existence of slavery and the ownership of enslaved Africans in the North American and Caribbean colonies but did not formally acknowledge the existence of slavery within the British Isles. Enslaved Africans were increasingly brought to Britain from this period onwards, but their status remained an ambiguous one. Nevertheless, from the late seventeenth century onwards, there are increasing numbers of examples of enslaved Africans being bought and sold in the British Isles, being forced to wear collars like pet animals and referred to as slaves. By the early eighteenth century, the sale of Africans in London, as well as elsewhere, became increasingly commonplace.[42]

However, there are also many examples of Africans running away, or in other ways refusing to accept an enslaved status. In 1691, the *London Gazette* reported the escape and recapture of a 'Black boy

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named Toby, aged about 19', only to have to report, shortly afterwards, that he had escaped yet again. In 1694, an advert in the same publication admitted that an African it described as a 'Tannymore with short bushy hair, very well shaped, in a grey livery suit with yellow, about seventeen or eighteen years of age, with a silver collar around his neck' had run away. The advert offered forty shillings reward to whoever might deliver him.[43] Such advertisements were not uncommon in the late seventeenth century and became even more common in the century following. Indeed, researchers at the University of Glasgow have recorded over 800 such adverts in the period from 1700 to 1780, detailing those who self-liberated themselves from moored ships, as well as towns and cities throughout the British Isles.[44] The majority of these Africans who attempted to liberate themselves were men, but there were also some women whose exploits have been recorded, such as an eighteen-year-old woman called Ann, who with her 'green gown and a brass collar around her neck' ran away from her owners in Glasgow in 1727.[45]

In these freedom endeavours, Africans' challenging conditions, even when held as slaves, differed little from those facing many English people of similarly servile status.[46] Africans were sometimes aided by the uncertain legal position regarding slavery and the fact that they might find alternative waged employment. Just as in the period before 1677, many Africans sought baptism, but increasingly they did so to establish that they were not 'infidels' and therefore could not be legally enslaved. There is therefore also evidence that those who asserted their ownership of Africans attempted to prevent their baptism. In 1701, it was reported in the *Weekly Journal or British Gazetteer* that a 'Negro servant' to a 'lady of distinction' in Lincolnshire was 'severely lashed' for having himself secretly baptized after growing impatient for a service promised but unfulfilled.[47] In 1760, *Lloyds Evening Post* published a report of a 'Negro girl about nine years old' who had 'eloped from her mistress on account of ill-usage'. The girl seems to have been befriended by 'two housekeepers' who brought her to a church in Westminster to be baptized. However, in the midst of the service she was kidnapped by her 'mistress', who told the assembled congregation that 'the girl was her slave' and she would 'use her as she pleased'. The newspaper account was written in

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protest, but also to ask whether such a situation was lawful in England. No reply to this question was published.[48] There is, however, also evidence that some 'owners' had their servants/slaves baptized, such as Margaret Lucy, who was baptized in Idlecote, Warwickshire, on New Year's Day of 1690 and who was recorded as 'belonging to ye Lady Underhill'.[49] In 1710 *The Tatler* received the following intriguing correspondence:

> Sir—I am a black-moor boy, and have, by my lady's order, been christened by the chaplain. The good man has gone further with me, and told me a great deal of good news; as that I am as good as my lady herself, as I am a Christian, and many other things; but, for all this, the parrot who came over with me from our country is as much esteemed by her as I am. Besides this, the shock dog has a collar that cost almost as much as mine. I desire also to know whether, now I am a Christian, I am obliged to dress like a Turk and wear a turban. I am, Sir, your most obedient servant, Pompey.[50]

The *Butts v. Penny* case was followed by other cases concerning the legality of slavery: *Lowe v. Elton* in the same year and *Gelly v. Cleve* in 1694. In the latter case, enslavement for a non-Christian 'Negro boy' was again judged lawful 'because they are heathens, and therefore a man may have property in them'. However, in a series of judgments, *Chamberlain v. Harvey* (1696), *Smith v. Brown and Cooper* (1701) and in *Smith v. Gould* (1706), Lord Chief Justice Holt made a contrary ruling, arguing that there could not be an action for 'trover', the recovery of the value of property unlawfully taken from an owner, because English law, unlike that in the colonies, did not recognize the buying and selling of slaves.[51] In 1696 Holt did acknowledge what was referred to as the status of 'a slavish servant' but made no judgment on whether the baptism of an enslaved African in England led to freedom.[52]

The Chamberlain case concerned a young African who had been taken to England from Barbados. After his owners died, he was baptized and worked for wages for several employers. The plaintiff in the case was the son of the African's late owner, who brought a case of trespass against his current employer, but the court rejected his claim.[53] In 1701, in a case that concerned the sale of an enslaved African in London, Holt went so far as to assert that 'as soon as a Negro comes

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into England he becomes free, one may be a villein in England but not a slave'.[54] These judgments recognized that servile status still existed, whether from feudal times or from the peculiar nature of colonial occupation. The right to the labour of another human was legal, whereas chattel slavery, which gave owners the right of life and death over their slaves, was legal in the colonies but in England it was not. In 1706 Holt ruled that 'by the common law no man can have a property in another', but he did not rule out the right of a master/mistress to the unpaid labour of a servant, or that of those enslaved overseas. Moreover, the ruling argued 'if I imprison my Negro, a Habeas Corpus will not lie to deliver him', thus granting slaveholders in English significant powers to detain enslaved Africans.[55]

Legal judgments did not alter the fact that enslaved Africans brought to Britain remained enslaved and could be bought and sold throughout the country. Researchers at the University of Glasgow have compiled a list of newspaper advertisements for the sale of enslaved Africans, although often the terms used refer to Africans who were to be 'disposed of' at such a place and date, mainly in London, Liverpool, Edinburgh and Bristol. These were generally sales of individual Africans by those who claimed ownership, but slave auctions, as well as sales of multiple Africans, were not unknown. For example, in 1766, *Williamson's Liverpool Advertiser* carried the following from a broker: 'To be sold at the Exchange Coffee House, in Water Street, this day 12 September instant at one o'clock precisely ELEVEN NEGROES imported by the Angola.' In the same city in October 1768 the *Liverpool General Advertiser* announced the auction of 'A Handsome NEGRO BOY, From ANGOLA, about 9 Years of Age'.[56] It is evident that several such auctions took place in the city and undoubtedly elsewhere and involved children brought directly from Africa, as well as from the Caribbean and the American colonies. One street in Liverpool was apparently known as 'Negro Row', as 'Negro slaves were occasionally sold by auction in the shops, warehouses and coffee houses, and also on the steps of the Custom House'.[57]

Normally such adverts offered young African men for sale, but young women featured too. Many of those offered for sale were children, often as young as five or six years old, and in at least one case there was a mother and child. African children, or in some cases

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Indian children, became a fashion accessory, in the same style as pet animals, and were often provided with fitted collars. They were a sign of wealth and sometimes appeared in portraits with their owners. Sale advertisements reflected the tastes of wealthy owners at the time. In 1705, for instance, the *Post Man and the Historical Account* carried the following advert: 'A Negro Boy about 12 years of age, that speaks English, is to be sold. Enquire of Mr Step. Rayner, a Watchmaker, at the sign of the Dial without Bishopgate.' In 1744, the *Daily Advertiser* issued a warning: 'To be SOLD, A Pretty little Negro Boy, about nine years old, and well limb'd. If not disposed of, is to be sent to the West Indies in six days-time.' In 1766, the *Edinburgh Evening Courant* carried the following: 'To be disposed of A NEGRO WOMAN, named Peggy, about nineteen years of age, born and brought up in Charlestoun, in the Province of South Carolina, speaks good English, an exceeding good House-wench, and washer and dresser, and is very tender and careful of children. She has a young Child, a Negro boy, about a year old, which will be disposed of with the mother.'[58]

What is most remarkable about many of these adverts is that African children are often included amongst a host of other merchandise,

Gallons of Water in a Minute, into a 4 Inch and half Bore, from a Well 12 Feet deep, and 13 Feet from the Surface of the Water.

To be Sold, to the Higheſt Bidder,

At GEORGE's COFFEE-HOUSE, on Tueſday next, preciſely at One o'Clock,

A NEGRO GIRL,

About Eight Years of Age, hath been from the Coaſt ſome Time, and is very healthy.

The Proprietor of the ſaid Girl having declin'd going to Sea, and being now ſettled in Worceſterſhire, would be glad to ſell her on very reaſonable Terms.

BARTLETT HODGETTS,

HABERDASHER, direct oppoſite GEORGE's COFFEE-

From an eighteenth-century newspaper in Liverpool

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not as the main item of sale, as if their disposal was not in any way particularly significant. In October 1743, for example, 'one Negro boy' was listed for sale, after alcohol, ribbons and candles, at a coffee house near the Royal Exchange in London. While in 1757 in Liverpool 'a Negro boy' was advertised for sale alongside wine and cider.[59] Most advertisements did not employ the term slave to describe their merchandise, but some did. A 'NEGRO SLAVE FOR SALE' was to be found in the *Public Ledger* in January 1761 and in the *Felix Farley Bristol Journal* of January 1768 could be found this advertisement – 'TO BE SOLD, A healthy NEGRO SLAVE, named PRINCE, 17 Years of Age'. Prices are seldom mentioned; perhaps this was considered bad taste. However, an advertisement in the *Edinburgh Evening Courant* in April 1768 showed that the sale price of 'A Black Boy' was £40.[60]

THE LAW

What is perhaps most significant is that Africans, whether they arrived directly from Africa, or from North America and the Caribbean, challenged their servile and slave status. One of the best-known legal cases is that of an African woman, Katherine Aukur, who had been brought to England from Barbados by a Robert Rich in about 1684. Her master and mistress 'tortured her and turned her out; her said master refusing to give her a discharge, she could not be "entertained in service elsewhere"'. Katherine's master then had her arrested and imprisoned. She, therefore, took her case to court, where it was heard at the Middlesex County Court in 1690. Katherine had been 'baptised at the parish Church of St. Katherine's, near the Tower', but this clearly did not exempt her from servitude, nor, it seems, did it make much impression on the court's ruling, although she is described as Rich's servant, not his slave. The court 'ordered that the said Katherine shall be at liberty to serve any person, until such time as the said Rich shall return from Barbados.'[61] The records provide no more information about Katherine, nor what occurred when Rich returned. What information we do have suggests that Africans could petition the courts and seek redress, but perhaps tells us more about the

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ambiguity of their servile status. In many ways, they were neither totally enslaved nor absolutely free. In the case of another African, John Caeser, in 1717, it was his wife Elizabeth who claimed that he had been held as a slave in Whitechapel for fourteen years, 'without any wages', even though he had been baptized for seven years. Elizabeth was forced to petition the courts, so that he might be set free to earn a livelihood for them both. The basis on which her petition was made was that she was 'advised that Slavery in England is inconsistent with the laws of this Realm'.[62]

In 1729, apparently in answer to demands for clarification from Bishop George Berkeley and other religious interests concerned to reassure slave owners that baptizing enslaved Africans did not automatically lead to manumission, the Attorney General, Sir Phillip Yorke, and Solicitor-General, Charles Talbot, gave a legal opinion on the status of slavery in Britain:

> We are of opinion, that a Slave, by coming from the West Indies, either with or without his master, to Great Britain or Ireland, doth not become free; and that his master's property or right in him is not thereby determined or varied; and baptism doth not bestow freedom on him, nor make any alteration to his temporal condition in these kingdoms. We are also of opinion, that the master may legally compel him to return again to the plantations.[63]

Although only a legal opinion, this position was reconfirmed in 1749 when Yorke, Lord Chancellor Hardwicke, ruled in the case of *Pearne v. Lisle* that regarding the legality of enslaving Africans, there was no distinction between the law in England and that in the colonies.[64] The legal opinion of Yorke and Talbot remained extremely influential and was still being published as a definitive view in the London press as late as 1762.[65] However, earlier in the same year, when legal action was again taken against an African in England the judgment was rather different. In that year in *Shanley v. Harvey*, the main defendant was an African, Joseph Harvey, who had been brought to England as a slave by Shanley around 1750, at the age of eight or nine. Shanley had then given him as a present to his niece, who had him baptized and changed his name. On her deathbed, in 1752, the niece had given Harvey seven or eight hundred pounds in cash, telling him to tell nobody but 'make a

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good use of it'. Although Shanley was represented by the Attorney General, the case was dismissed by the Lord Chancellor, who simply proclaimed, 'As soon as a man sets foot on English ground he is free: a Negro may maintain an action against his master for ill-usage and may have a habeas corpus if restrained of his liberty.'[66] However, legal judgments which denied Africans their rights and rejected the precedent established by Holt also occurred during the period between 1729 and the Mansfield judgment in 1772. Imperial law enacted in 1732 which decreed that enslaved Africans might be considered as property in the payment of debts throughout the empire led to the public auction of an African boy in London in 1763, although not without opposition from outraged Londoners.[67] This particular case, as well as several others, show that the fate and status of enslaved Africans in England was not simply determined by legal opinion and judgments, but also by challenges to slave status and ill-treatment by the supporters of Africans in Britain and most importantly by the actions of Africans themselves. All these laudable efforts were a precursor to those actions mounted later on in the eighteenth century in what can truly be described as a mass abolitionist movement.

AFRICAN ABOLITIONISTS

Even before the eighteenth century, individual Africans such as Katherine Aukur had made efforts to defend their right to appropriate payment for work, or services provided, and often made efforts to completely liberate themselves from servile status. During the eighteenth century, Africans also applied to the courts for recognition of their rights and protection from arbitrary detention and human trafficking. In 1730, for example, it was reported in the *Country Journal or the Craftsman* that a 'Negro Servant' had won a court case demanding wages from the captain of a naval vessel. The court awarded the plaintiff £42 in addition to legal costs.[68] In many instances Africans had public support, and on the few occasions when public slave auctions occurred these did not take place without some opposition. It is difficult to assess the extent of this opposition during the early part of the eighteenth century, but there is often evidence of its occurrence in contemporary

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publications.[69] Running away, or self-liberation, was also practised frequently. On one day in October 1732, the London-based *Daily Post* carried two advertisements from separate 'masters' offering rewards for the safe return of two 'Negro servants', Tobias Fortuyn and Christopher Corydon. Readers were warned not to 'harbour or entertain' these young African men who, it was suggested, might well try to seek alternative paid employment on more favourable terms.[70]

In 1764, the *Gentleman's Magazine* complained that the importing of African servants had created 'a grievance that requires a remedy'. The article explained that 'the main objection to their importation is that they cease to consider themselves as slaves in this free country, nor will they put up with an inequality of treatment, nor more willingly perform the laborious offices or servitude than our own people, and if put to it, are generally sullen, spiteful, treacherous and revengeful'.[71] A similar complaint appeared in the *London Chronicle* in the same year concerning the 'folly which is become too fashionable, of importing Negroes into this country for servants'.[72] A year later a letter-writer complained that 'Negro and East India servants' were 'estimated at the lowest to be thirty thousand in the whole kingdom'.[73]

In 1768 Sir John Fielding, a London magistrate echoed these earlier complaints when he wrote that enslaved Africans:

> Having no right to wages; they no sooner arrive here than they put themselves on a footing with other servants, become intoxicated with liberty, grow refractory and either by persuasion of others, or from their own inclinations, begin to expect wages according to their own opinion of their merits.[74]

According to Fielding there were, 'a great number of black men and women who have made themselves so troublesome to the families that brought them over as to get themselves discharged'. Fielding complained that 'they no sooner come over, but the Sweets of Liberty and the Conversation with Free men and Christians enlarge their Minds.'[75] These self-liberated Africans then 'enter into Societies and make their business to corrupt and dissatisfy the mind of every black servant that comes to England'. They encouraged others to become baptized or married, in the belief that this would prevent continued slave status.[76]

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The liberating effect of marriage was demonstrated by several eighteenth-century court cases, the most famous of which is the case of Mary and John Hylas. Both had formerly been enslaved and were separately brought from Barbados to England. There they met and, in 1758, with their owners' consent, were married. John Hylas was freed and the couple lived together for eight years. However, in 1766 Mary was kidnapped by agents employed by her former owners and transported back to the Caribbean to be sold. John Hylas, with the assistance of the English abolitionist Granville Sharp, took the case to court, where he was victorious. The former slave owner was compelled to return Mary to her husband and John was awarded nominal damages. However, the case centred more on the rights of a husband than it did on the rights of an African woman. Indeed, the nominal damages awarded showed that even the rights of a husband were not fully upheld when he was an African as well.[77] A similar judgment was made in another case, around the same time, by the Attorney General. He argued that the marriage contract entitled the husband to the company of his wife, whereas a slave owner had no legal contract which could override that right.

There is thus some evidence that Africans were taking action to decide their own status, in England at least, and becoming organized for that purpose. Fielding's comments were echoed by the Jamaican owner of enslaved Africans and leading racist, Edward Long, who also complained about Africans brought to England. Amongst other things he lamented the fact that 'A Negroe running away from his master here is not by statute declared liable to imprisonment for any such offence.' Long continues:

> these servants soon grow acquainted with a knot of blacks, who having eloped from their respective owners at different times, repose themselves here in ease and indolence, and endeavour to strengthen their party, by seducing as many of these strangers into their association as they can work to their purpose.[78]

Long also makes it clear that these self-liberated Africans were assisted in their efforts to remain at liberty by 'vicious white servants and abandoned prostitutes'. These 'zealous friends' then assisted them to find paid employment, often with 'persons of rank and fortune'. Long

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particularly condemned those Africans who worked for low wages in Britain, arguing that they are denying employment to 'our white servants'. He was even more troubled about those who had 'eloped' in London and enjoy the company of 'the lower class of women in England', with whom they might produce 'a linsey-wolsey race'. He was greatly alarmed that Africans might subsequently be able to buy their way into Parliament, or become landowners.[79] Gilbert Francklyn, a human-trafficker and owner of enslaved Africans, also complained that Africans in England were encouraged and enticed to run away and that 'they found themselves upon a perfect equality, at least, with the inferior white people'. This status as well as 'the ideas of liberty . . . could not fail of having pernicious effects upon their minds, and great numbers ran away from their masters'.[80] Francklyn claimed that as many as 20,000 might have been 'lost to their owners' in this way, although this figure is clearly an exaggeration.

In comments directed at slave owners, Fielding made it clear that they could not rely on the courts for the safe return of fugitive Africans. Such reliance he explained 'is a Mistake, for Justices have nothing to do with Blacks but when they offend against the law'.[81] He also pointed out that attempts to reclaim Africans who had run away were fraught with danger because they had 'the Mob on their side'; in other words, the support of the ordinary citizens of London, especially the workers, who were starting to play an increasingly significant political role, whether in support of the radical politician John Wilkes or, in later years, during such events as the Gordon Riots which broke out in London in June 1780. Commencing as anti-Catholic demonstrations led by the Scottish protestant MP Lord George Gordon, who was also opposed to slavery, the 'riots' became a major insurrection lasting several days and were directed mainly against the rich and symbols of authority, including the houses of Fielding and Mansfield, as well as Newgate and other gaols. Thousands of troops were required to restore order and hundreds of Londoners were killed or wounded. Three of those arrested were described as 'black' in the records: Charlotte Gardiner, John Glover and Benjamin Bowfry. Glover, a servant, was found guilty but later reprieved. The fate of Bowfry is unknown, but Gardiner, who appears to have had nobody to intercede for her, was executed in July 1780.[82]

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In what was soon to become an era of revolutions, Fielding warned of the dangers of people power in both London and in the Caribbean colonies. In the latter, he explained that:

> there is great Reason to fear . . . those Blacks who have been sent back to the Plantations, after they have lived some Time in this Country of Liberty, where they have learned to read and write, been acquainted with the Use, and entrusted with the Care of Arms.

These Africans, he claimed, were responsible for 'those insurrections' occurring in the Caribbean.[83]

Although there is no strong evidence to suggest a link between Africans becoming organized in England and insurrections of the enslaved in the colonies, it is a fascinating possibility. It is not surprising that during the 1760s and thereafter the defenders of slavery and human trafficking were becoming increasingly concerned about their property and the system that provided their wealth. The 'state of war' between the enslaved and their enslavers had led to major battles in Jamaica in the early 1760s, a 'national liberation struggle' in Berbice in 1763, and several uprisings in Honduras in 1765 and 1768. Such rebellions continued in the Caribbean, in particular, before the outbreak of the revolution in the French colony of St Domingue in the 1790s. As we can see from the testimony of Fielding, Francklyn and Long, as well as from press reports, Africans contested their slave and servile status, organized and liberated themselves from bondage and, in all these endeavours, were aided by other poor and working people in England. White servants too could be harshly treated, might be denied wages and in response might run away and be sought after. However, it was unlikely that they would be kidnapped and sent to the colonies as chattels, although they might be press-ganged into the navy. In this important respect, the lives and status of significant numbers of Africans in Britain were very different, since many of them were brought from colonies where chattel slavery existed.[84]

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COMMUNITY OF INTERESTS

We have clear evidence of what the historian Folarin Shyllon referred to as a 'community of interests': Africans 'banded together' to provide welfare and comradeship, to assist each other in the struggle for emancipation, since most Africans in Britain faced common problems stemming from the existence of slavery. This 'community' might well also have included the English wives of Africans, a group that highly alarmed Long, as well as other English supporters of slavery. In addition, there is evidence that Africans met together socially. A visitor to the house of Samuel Johnson, the famous writer, reported that when the door was opened by 'Francis Barber, his black servant . . . a group of his African countrymen were sitting round a fire in the gloomy anti-room'. Such gatherings at Johnson's house might also have included the African servant of his friend, the artist Sir Joshua Reynolds. It seems likely that this man was John Shropshire, who was robbed in a case that was later heard at the Old Bailey. Shropshire was robbed by another African, named Thomas Windsor, who was subsequently sentenced to death, but he kept the details of the case secret from his master. When Reynolds read of the incident and the sentence in the press he was appalled. He ordered new clothes to be taken to the prisoner and instructed Shropshire to take regular meals to Windsor. Reynolds prevailed upon his friend, the MP Edmund Burke, to lessen Windsor's punishment and as a result his sentence was changed to transportation.[85] In this instance the community of interests seems to have included non-Africans too.

We also know of other African social gatherings, in London at least. In February 1764, the *London Chronicle* reported:

> Among the sundry fashionable routs or clubs, that are held in town, that of the Blacks, or Negro Servants is not the least. On Wednesday night last, no less than fifty-seven of them, men and women, supped, drank, and entertained themselves with dancing and music, consisting of violins, French horns and other instruments, at a public house in Fleet-street, till four in the morning. No Whites were allowed to be present, for all the performers were Blacks.[86]

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From 1726, there are reports of a christening ceremony of 'Guiney Blacks', as well as reports of 'Black guests' at the funeral of a Black servant.[87] In 1773 when two Black men were incarcerated for begging, the press reported that they were visited by 300 of their compatriots, who contributed towards their upkeep.[88] Later on in the century the Sons of Africa was established to campaign specifically against the trafficking of Africans. In the 1770s there is also evidence of the existence of something referred to as the Black Society. In 1772, a letter appeared in the press from a certain Mungo, who claimed to be the Secretary of the Black Society, enquiring as to the well-being of the 'Black servant maid of Captain Hughes Lady' who was to be sold as a chattel. Mungo made it clear that he, the Society and 'all our brethren' were aware of the judgment by Lord Mansfield and were 'desirous of knowing what has become of our poor sister'.[89] Although Mungo might be considered a derogatory name, following the blackface portrayal of a character of the same name in the comic opera *The Padlock*, which premiered in London in 1768,[90] nevertheless, the appearance of such a letter suggests that slavery in Britain remained in the spotlight. The Black Society's concern about the fate of a 'sister' is another example of the 'community of interests' working together for one of their own.

STRONG, LEWIS AND SOMERSET

In 1765, the predicament of Jonathan Strong, an African formerly enslaved in Barbados, came to the attention of a Granville Sharp, at that time a minor civil servant who would soon become one of the leading campaigners against slavery. The young man called at the London surgery maintained by Sharp's brother for the poor and needy. Strong had been beaten and nearly blinded by his former owner, who had brought him to England and then thrown him out on the street. The Sharp brothers supported Strong during the four months he spent in hospital, as well as during his convalescence, and found him new employment, a position he held for some two years. He was then by chance discovered by his former owner, who had him imprisoned.

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Strong managed to contact Granville Sharp, who demanded his release, but not before his former owner had sold him to another, who was preparing to ship him overseas. Initially Strong was released from custody, as he had not committed any crime, but then Sharp was charged with having robbed Strong's former owner of his property.

The case of Jonathan Strong is significant for many reasons, not least Sharp's entry into the anti-slavery cause. He began to study the legal rights and position of Africans in England when he was advised by one eminent lawyer that the 1729 Yorke-Talbot opinion had the force of law and that therefore he was unlikely to win his case. Sharpe therefore embarked on his own two-year study of the law, although he had no legal training, and found no legal basis for slavery in England. He refuted the Yorke-Talbot opinion and published the results of his research in 1769 as *A Representation of the Injustice and Dangerous Tendency of Tolerating Slavery or of Admitting the Least Claim of Private Property in the Persons of Men, in England*. By such means, Sharp forced those who wished to re-enslave Strong to desist and, at the same time, he began campaigning against slavery and the trafficking of Africans. As the reader may recall, in 1768 Sharp became involved in the case of John and Mary Hylas. In 1769, he condemned an advertisement for the sale of an eleven-year-old 'black girl', who was described as the 'property' of the vendor: 'extremely handy, works at her needle tolerably, and speaks English perfectly well; is of an excellent temper, and willing disposition'.[91]

Sharp then became involved in the case of George August, known as Thomas Lewis, an enslaved African from the Gold Coast living in London, whose former owner attempted to kidnap him and send him to Jamaica to be sold as a slave. In this case, the kidnapping was witnessed and several people attempted to aid Lewis. As Sharp had gained a reputation in such matters, he was invited to help secure a writ of *habeas corpus* and Lewis' freedom. The case was eventually heard in a court presided over by Lord Chief Justice Mansfield, where a jury found in favour of Lewis, on the grounds that he was not property. Although in this case Mansfield made no judgment regarding slavery in England, his summing up centred on whether evidence could be produced to prove the ownership of Lewis. In this regard, he added 'his being black, will not prove the property'.[92] However,

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Mansfield was opposed to any action being taken against the kidnappers and had tried, unsuccessfully, to get the case settled outside court, so as to avoid any judgment on slavery itself.[93]

It was during another similar case that Mansfield was compelled to make a more explicit judgment. This was the case of James Somerset, an enslaved man brought to England from Virginia in 1769. Somerset subsequently left his master but was kidnapped to be resold into slavery in Jamaica. The case assumed some prominence, not least owing to the fact that the owner of Somerset was backed by those 'West Indian merchants' who were the defenders of the enslavement of Africans.[94] Somerset was supported not only by Sharp but also by a legal team that freely provided their expertise. The importance of the case drew in others, including those in North America, such as the abolitionist Anthony Benezet, a zealous supporter of 'the Negro cause', who hoped for a definitive judgment against the existence of slavery in England. Mansfield's final judgment was that 'the claim of slavery never can be supported, the power claimed never was in use here, or acknowledged by the law. Upon the whole, we cannot say the cause returned is sufficient by the law; and therefore the man [Somerset] must be discharged.'[95]

This judgment was momentous and appeared to substantiate earlier pronouncements that as soon as a slave set foot in England s/he became free. It was certainly seen in this light by many at the time and as a result celebrated, not least by Africans themselves, in Britain and elsewhere. As the *Morning Chronicle* noted:

> Several Negroes were in court yesterday, to hear the event of a cause so interesting to their tribe, and after judgement of the court was known, bowed with profound respect to the Judges, and shaking each other by the hand, congratulated themselves upon the recovery of the rights of human nature, and their happy lot that permitted them to breathe the free air of England. – No sight upon earth could be more pleasingly affecting to the feeling mind, than the joy which shone at that instant in these poor men's sable countenances.[96]

Following the court case nearly 200 Africans held a ball 'at a public house in Westminster', while the *Public Advertiser* reported 'a Subscription is now raising among a great Number of Negroes, in and

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about this Metropolis, for the purpose of presenting Somerset with a handsome Gratuity, for having so nobly stood up in Defence of the natural Rights of the sable Part of the human Creation.'[97] Ten Africans wrote a letter of thanks to Sharp, referring to themselves as 'those who were considered slaves, even in England itself, till your aid and exertions set us free'.[98] Moreover, Somerset's former owner received notice from another owner of enslaved Africans that Somerset had written about the case to a Mr Dublin, an enslaved African in Bristol Wells, who had concluded that Mansfield 'had given them their freedoms', and therefore immediately absconded.[99] One modern historian has even claimed that the judgment contributed to the demands for American independence and the rebellion of July 1776.[100] However, Mansfield made the judgment with some reluctance. There was no legal basis for slavery in England but, he warned, 'the setting of 14,000 or 15,000 men at once loose by a solemn opinion is very disagreeable in the effects it threatens'. Whether such numbers of enslaved Africans existed or not, Mansfield did not liberate them. During the case of Charlotte Howe, a Black woman claiming poor relief, in which Mansfield presided in 1785, he upheld her status as a slave, explaining that the judgment in 1772 went 'no further than that the master cannot by force compel the slave to go out of the kingdom'. As an enslaved woman brought to Britain, Mansfield maintained that Charlotte Howe had neither right to poor relief, nor right to wages.[101]

Some Africans remained enslaved in England for many years after this judgment, as can be judged from reports in the press.[102] Two years after the judgment, Olaudah Equiano found that he, Sharp, and the law were powerless to prevent the kidnapping and transportation to the Caribbean of a former enslaved man, John Annis.[103] Sharp himself was sent an advertisement from a Liverpool newspaper in 1779 which announced 'to be sold at auction . . . a Black boy about fourteen years old, and a large Mountain Tiger cat'.[104] Nevertheless, the judgment set an important precedent and was clearly influential during subsequent cases, including those heard in Scotland.

The Somerset case was widely reported in the press and stirred more debate about the question of slavery, not only in Britain but also in the colonies. It was perceived to be in favour of the rights of Africans in Britain and against the interests of the slave owners.[105] Its

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significance can be judged by the fact that one of the leading owners of enslaved Africans, the infamous Edward Long, found it necessary to immediately publish his *Candid Reflections Upon the Judgement Lately Awarded by the Court of King's Bench, in Westminster-Hall, on What Is Commonly Called the Negroe-Cause by a Planter.* Long argued that the laws of England were not designed for 'Negroe-slaves', who, he stressed, were an 'absolute necessity' for the wealth of Britain and its colonies. He emphasized that Parliament had passed numerous laws upholding the legitimacy of human trafficking and the ownership of enslaved Africans. Long clearly understood that the struggle of Africans in Britain to liberate themselves, which had been recognized by Mansfield's judgment, also undermined the right he and his friends had to own Africans as property in the colonies. Africans, he lamented, would conclude that they were held in bondage 'by no other obligation than the laws of the colony, and an exertion of illegal force over them by their masters'.[106]

AFRICANS IN SCOTLAND

African men, women and children were brought to Scotland in much the same way, although in smaller numbers, as they were brought to other parts of Britain.[107] We find the same type of advertisements in the press for the sale of Africans, and examples of those who attempted to liberate themselves by running away, although there were far fewer than in England.[108] Such notices show that there were African fugitives in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Arbroath, Greenock and other towns and cities throughout the eighteenth century. Ann, the eighteen-year-old 'Negro woman' who ran away in 1721, was perhaps uncommon as a female self-liberator, but there was much that was common about the description in the Edinburgh press, 'a brass collar about her neck, on which are engraved these words Gustavus Brown in Dalkeith, his Negro'.[109] The self-liberation of Africans also seems to have taken a similar course as in England. The same struggle between Africans and those who wished to own them also existed in Scotland and was evident in the Scottish courts, which had a different legal system from that of England.

One such case was brought by Jamie Montgomery, an African, who

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had been bought for a little over £56 in Virginia as a child in 1750, and then brought to Beith in Scotland. There he had himself baptized, according to his legal owner 'to free himself of my lawful service'. The owner, objecting to the baptism, attempted to send him back to Virginia and so Montgomery absconded but was subsequently arrested and imprisoned in Edinburgh. His case was then heard before the Court of Session, effectively the supreme court in Scotland, but he died before a judgment was given, although again the significance of baptism seems to have been the main focus of the case.[110]

In 1770 baptism was also key in the case of David Spens, formerly known as Black Tom, who had been bought as a slave in Grenada for £30 about ten years previously, and then brought to Fife by his owner David Dalrymple, who planned to send him back to Grenada – but not before agreeing to his baptism in 1769. It seems likely that Spens adopted his surname from Reverend Dr Harry Spens, the minister at the Parish Church of East Wemyss, where he was baptized. The owner later claimed that Spens had also been strongly influenced by a local farmer, John Henderson, a resident of Wemyss and church elder, who had 'put it into the Negroes [sic] head that Baptism by the Law of this Country would emancipate him from his servitude'.[111] Following the baptism and on the day when he was supposed to be returned to Grenada, Spens withdrew his labour and with Henderson's support wrote to his owner to affirm his freedom and threaten legal action to defend it:

> I am now by the Christian Religion Liberate and set at freedom from my old yoke bondage & slavery and by the Laws of this Christian land there is no Slavery nor vestige of Slavery allowed nevertheless you take it upon you to exercise your old Tyrannical Power over me and would dispose of me arbitrarily at your despotic will & Pleasure and for that end you threaten to send me abroad out of this Country to the West Indies and there dispose of me for money.[112]

Spens was arrested, but later freed and his owner died before the case could be heard. What is perhaps most significant about the case is the support that Spens received, not only from Henderson but also from the miners, salters and agricultural labourers of Wemyss. Indeed, Henderson wrote to Dalrymple that if he were to surrender Spens, 'the

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