

OMAR VICTOR DIOP

Disposability

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Liberty

Extended Captions

Nanny and Quao 1720



Queen Nanny (c. 1686 – c. 1755), a Jamaican national heroine, was a major figure of the Maroon resistance in the eighteenth century. Nanny was born into the Asante people of what is today known as Ghana, although much of what is known about her derives from oral history, as little textual evidence exists. It is believed that she fled the plantations with her brother Quao, and together they founded the Maroon community of escaped slaves around 1720 in the Blue Mountains in the town of Portland, Jamaica. This area, named Nanny Town, was considered inaccessible by the British because of its altitude and the lack of trails leading to it. The Maroons, a majority of whom were descendants of West Africans, led most of the slave rebellions in Jamaica, helping to free slaves from plantations and integrating them into their community. Nanny herself is credited with organising the release of several hundreds of slaves during a period of thirty years.

Dutty Boukman 1791



Dutty Boukman was an early pioneer of the Haitian Revolution, leading a community of Maroons. A former slave from Jamaica and practising voodoo houngan priest, Boukman is believed to have led – together with the priestess Cécile Fatiman – the infamous religious ceremony at Bois Caïman of August 1791, which served as a catalyst to the slave revolt that sparked the Haitian Revolution. He was killed a few months later, on 7 November 1791, by French planters and colonial troops, who publicly displayed Boukman's head in an attempt to dispel the aura of invincibility that he had cultivated. Boukman's rebellion is considered one of the foundations of Haitian national identity and its stance against oppression.

The Women's War 1929



In 1929, tens of thousands of south-eastern Nigerian women rebelled against British colonial powers in what is known as the Women's War, or the Aba Women's Riots. This insurgent movement brought together more than 25,000 women in a fight against policies imposed by British authorities: in particular, special taxes levied on female market traders, which were implemented by male leaders (warrant chiefs) appointed by a colonial governor. The women rebelled above all to preserve the status they had held in their traditional societies before the arrival of the British, who felt the matriarchal system was against the moral order. The women's activism prompted colonial authorities to drop their plans and to reduce the power of the warrant chiefs. Considered as the first major challenge to British authority in Nigeria and West Africa during the colonial period, the Women's War took months for the government to suppress, and became a historic example of feminist and anti-colonial protest.

The Railway Workers of Dakar 1938 and 1947



In 1881, France, then a colonial power occupying most of West Africa, began a 1,289-kilometre railway project designed to transport the resources of the region to the coast. The working conditions for the African railway day labourers were particularly difficult and precarious because of the racial discrimination they suffered. The railway would eventually become a means of resistance for the indigenous workforce, most notably through two strikes that are still commemorated today as key moments in the history of the African trade union movement and the anti-colonial activist struggle. The first strike by the Dakar-Niger railway workers, which took place in Thiés, Senegal, in 1938, was suppressed in a violent bloodbath. On 10 October 1947, another general strike by indigenous workers from all over West Africa paralysed the colonial system, lasting in Senegal for an unprecedented period of five months until 19 March 1948. The protection of workers' rights, the standard of living, wage increases and, most importantly, equal treatment for all were at the forefront of the workers' demands.

Thiaroye 1944



In 1944, the Senegalese Tirailleurs (West African soldiers who fought in the colonial infantry in the French Army during the Second World War) were released from German prisons and repatriated with the promise of remuneration, including pensions. These infantrymen came from all over French West Africa and French Equatorial Africa, which stretched from Senegal to the Congo. On 1 December 1944, a group of soldiers staged a military coup at the Thiaroye camp on the outskirts of Dakar, Senegal, to protest against poor working conditions and France's failure to compensate them for their service as promised. A bloody repression was organised by the colonial authorities in response, during which approximately seventy of these Second World War veterans were killed. Commonly known as the Thiaroye Massacre, the mutiny is seen as a crucial revolt against the colonial regime that constituted the beginnings of a nationalist movement.

Aline Sitoe Diatta 1944



Born around 1920 in Kabrousse, southern Senegal, Aline Sitoe Diatta is celebrated as a symbol of resistance in the farmers' rebellion against colonial oppression. At just twenty years old, she allegedly became one of the leaders of a tax resistance movement during the Second World War. A religious figure, she was also credited with having mystical powers because of her frequent visions. When a boycott started by market traders of her native region, Casamance, proved successful, the French authorities imprisoned the leadership. France had confiscated more than half of the agricultural crops of this region to feed the soldiers on the battlefield, and used their peanut cultivation to supply its soap factories. This had been done at the expense of traditional food crops such as rice. Diatta was arrested by the colonial authorities for insurrection and deported to Timbuktu, Mali, where she is said to have died in jail aged twenty-four from the abuse she suffered. She is widely heralded in Senegal as an emblematic figure of identity-based resistance.

The Mutiny of Freeman Field 1945



The Freeman Field Mutiny refers to a two-day protest during the Second World War by a group of African-American soldiers from the 477th Bombardment Group, who attempted to access an all-white officers' club on the Freeman Army Airfield base, near Seymour, Indiana. On 5 and 6 April 1945, to challenge de facto segregation at Freeman, the participating blacksoldiers forced their way into Club One, which was reserved exclusively for white officers. The mutiny resulted in the arrest of 162 black officers, three of whom were court-martialled on minor charges. It was not until 1995 that their convictions were revoked following a pardon. This mutiny is considered one of the first demands to achieve racial integration in the United States Armed Services, later implemented in the Executive Order 9981 issued in 1948.

Selma 1965



Between 7 and 21 March 1965, three protest marches to demand the right to vote for African-American citizens were held along the 80-kilometre highway linking Selma to the state capital of Montgomery in Alabama, USA. These pivotal marches represented a defining moment in the struggle for civil rights and were instrumental in the fight for black voting rights. During the first of these marches, on 7 March, 600 protesters demanded an end to discrimination in voter registration, many of whom were severely attacked by law enforcement agencies, state troopers and white separatists. This event became known as Bloody Sunday. Dr Martin Luther King participated in the subsequent marches, on 9 and 17 March. Numerous killings, abuse by the police and the Ku Klux Klan, as well as the legal battles that marked the weeks of protests, all drew the attention of the national and international community to the issues of civil rights. The marches led to the signing of the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

Breakfast for The Children of The Black Panthers 1969



The Free Breakfasts for Children initiative was a revolutionary community programme started by the Black Panthers at their headquarters in Oakland, California. It was one of the first school food programmes in the country, providing free breakfasts to disadvantaged children each morning. Based on the belief that children could not take full advantage of their education by going to school hungry, it reflected the Black Panthers' key message of self-determination and illustrated their belief in the importance of education. The programme was funded through donations from within the communities being served, receiving support from local stores, churches and groceries. In its first year, the programme became so popular that it was extended all over the United States, and by the end of 1969 the Black Panthers were serving full free breakfasts to 20,000 school-aged children in nineteen different cities. Inspired in part by the ideas and actions of the Black Panthers in the 1960s, the US Department of Agriculture later started their own School Breakfast Programme, which feeds nearly 13 million students daily.

The Sonacotra Tenant Strike 1974–80



From 1974 to 1980, a prolonged strike pitted the tenants of Sonacotra, a French state-owned agency responsible for providing public housing to migrant workers from north and sub-Saharan Africa, against its management, many of whom were former colonial officers. Those striking opposed perpetual rent increases and demanded better living conditions in worker dormitories controlled by the Sonacotra authorities, paving the way for the first collective protest of black African immigrants in postcolonial France. A struggle for tenants' and workers' rights, the Sonacotra Tenant Strike is regarded as a pivotal moment of black solidarity in the history of collective political activism by African diasporas in Europe.

The Soweto Uprising 1976



A defining moment in the struggle to end apartheid, the Soweto Uprising refers to a series of student demonstrations in South Africa, which began on the morning of 16 June 1976 when around 20,000 students from Soweto's higher education institutions came together to protest against the introduction of Afrikaans as the primary language of instruction. They were violently repressed by the police, who quickly opened fire on the students; the number of young boys and girls killed is estimated to be in the hundreds. To commemorate these events, 16 June was declared a public holiday in South Africa, known as Youth Day. Historians have argued that the Soweto Uprising, which highlighted the role of young people in shaping the character and form of revolt, served as both an inspiration and a template for a second wave of unrest in the 1980s, which eventually led to apartheid's demise.

Trayvon Martin 2012



Trayvon Benjamin Martin (1995–2012) was an African-American teenager who was murdered in 2012 in Sanford, Florida. On his way to his father's home from buying candy and a can of iced tea, 17-year-old Trayvon crossed a fenced area where there had been a series of burglaries. Former neighbourhood watch champion and resident of this gated neighbourhood, George Zimmerman, took matters into his own hands despite orders from the police not to do so, having previously contacted them by telephone on several recorded 911 calls. An altercation ensued and the unarmed teenager was fatally shot in the chest. After his trial, Zimmerman was acquitted by an all-female jury of six women. The killing of Trayvon Martin became a catalyst in the fight against perpetual violence and systematic racism towards black people and members of the African-American community, triggering international activist movements, and Black Lives Matter campaigns. One of the most popular protest marches was the Million Hoodie March held in March 2012 in New York, where thousands of people came together dressed in hooded jumpers similar to the one worn by the young Trayvon Martin on the day of his killing.

Diaspora

Extended Captions

St Benedict of Palermo 1526–1589



Benedetto Manasseri, also known as Benedict the Moor, was born in San Frantello, Sicily, of African slaves. He was freed at birth because of his parents' loyal service to the Church. At the age of twenty-one he joined a local hermit community. Later on, he was assigned to the Franciscan Friary in Palermo, where he quickly rose through the Order's ranks. Benedict was beatified by Pope Benedict XIV in 1743 and canonised in 1807 by Pope Pius VII. He is venerated as a saint in the Catholic and Lutheran churches, and remembered for his charity, his professed healing powers, his understanding of scripture and his tolerance when confronted with racial prejudice. Benedict's feast day is celebrated on the 4th of April.

Original sculpture attributed to José Montes de Oca.

Malik Ambar 1556?–1626



Malik Ambar was born in Harare, in modern-day Ethiopia, and sold into military slavery as a child by his parents in the second half of the sixteenth century. He later became a Siddi military leader and statesman in the Deccan region of India. Between 1607 and 1626 he was the regent of Ahmednagar Sultanate, serving as commander-in-chief. He is credited as being a proponent of guerrilla warfare, and built an independent mercenary force numbering up to 1,500 men. One of the most celebrated Afro-Indians in history and a figure of veneration to the Siddis of Gujarat, Ambar was known as a great administrator, city planner and military tactician. He died in 1626 at the age of eighty.

Original painting by Hashim.

Henrique Dias 1605?–1662



Henrique Dias was born in Pernambuco, Brazil, then a Portuguese colony. There is no consensus among historians as to whether he was born free or captive. He joined the army and led other freed slaves in a battle against the Netherlands during its attempt to take over Brazil. An esteemed military leader, known as 'Governor of the Blacks' from 1636 onwards, Dias was in charge of a regiment of enslaved and free Afro-Brazilian soldiers defending Portuguese settlements against the Dutch forces. Having fought in a number of key battles in the defence of Salvador, Bahia, Dias's title was later expanded to 'Governor of All Creoles, Blacks, and Mulattoes'. He may have received nobility status within Brazil, and some historians suggest that Dias was awarded a Knighthood in The Order of Christ for his courage and leadership.

Original portrait by an unknown artist.

Ikhlas Khan unknown–1656



Ikhlās Khan, formerly Malik Raihan Habshi, was an Abyssinian slave in modern-day Ethiopia and a prominent Afro-Indian political figure in the seventeenth century. He became chief minister to the Sultanate of Bijapur. From 1627 to 1656, he served as Prime Minister, and was renamed Ikhlas Khan. He later moved to Adoni in the Kurnool district, where he governed and built a notable mosque.

Original portrait by an unknown artist.

Juan de Pareja 1606?–1670



Juan de Pareja, the son of an enslaved woman of African descent and a white Spanish father, lived in Antequera, Spain. He served as an assistant to Spanish artist Diego Velázquez in his painting workshop, and later became a notable painter in his own right. Velázquez signed a contract of manumission for Pareja around 1650, making him a free man. He produced an oil painting of Pareja while they were travelling to Rome, Italy, in 1650. It is the earliest known portrait of a Spanish man of African descent.

Original painting by Diego Velázquez.

Don Miguel de Castro, Emissary of Congo



Between 1643 and 1644, Congolese ambassador Don Miguel de Castro and his two servants, Pedro Sunda and Diego Bemba, arrived in the Netherlands via Brazil as part of a delegation sent by the ruler of Sonho, a province of Congo. One of the objectives of their journey was to find a resolution to an internal conflict in Congo. Castro and his servants were portrayed dressed in accordance with Portuguese fashion in three paintings made for the Dutch governor between 1643 and 1650. These were gifted to the Danish King Frederik III in 1654, and exhibited at the Royal Kunstkammer.

Original painting attributed to Jasper Beckx or Albert Eckhout.

Ayuba Suleiman Diallo 1701–1773



Ayuba Suleiman Diallo, also called Job ben Solomon, was born to a family of Muslim clerics in Bun-du, Senegal. A victim of the Atlantic slave trade in 1731, he worked on a plantation in America before arriving in London in 1733, where he was bought out of slavery by public subscription. Ayuba's memoirs were published in 1734, and are considered to be one of the earliest understandings in Britain of West African culture, Islam and slavery. Diallo is cited as a pioneering figure in asserting the moral rights and humanity of black people.

Original painting by William Hoare of Bath.

Angelo Soliman 1721?–1796



Angelo Soliman was an Austrian Freemason, born as Mmadi Make in sub-Sahara Africa. He was captured at the age of eight and taken to Marseilles, France, where he was presented as a 'gift' to Georg Christian, Prince of Lobkowitz, imperial governor of Sicily in 1734. After the death of the prince, Soliman served in the Vienna household of Prince Joseph Wenzel I of Liechtenstein, eventually rising to chief servant and royal tutor to the prince's heirs. He also joined the Masonic Lodge in Vienna, soon becoming Grand Master of the Lodge, where his scholarship influenced the direction of Freemasonry throughout Europe. Highly respected in Viennese society during his lifetime, after his death his body became a specimen for ethnologists and an exhibit in a cabinet of curiosities.

Original portrait by Johann Gottfried Haid based on an artwork by Johann Nepomuk Steiner.

Olaudah Equiano 1745?–1797



Olaudah Equiano, known in his lifetime as Gustavus Vassa, was a writer and abolitionist born in the Igbo region in present-day Nigeria (although some sources list his birthplace in the Americas). He earned his freedom with his savings, worked as a seaman and travelled widely for twenty years before settling in London in 1786. As a member of the 'Sons of Africa', a group of twelve black men who campaigned against slavery, he became actively involved with the British abolitionist movement. His autobiography, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa, the African* (1789), attracted wide attention and was considered highly influential in gaining passage of the Slave Trade Act 1807, which ended the African slave trade for Britain and its colonies.

Original engraving by an unknown artist.

Jean-Baptiste Belley 1746?–1805



Jean-Baptiste Belley, also known as Mars, was born on the island of Goree, Senegal. Kidnapped by slave catchers when he was aged two, he was taken to the French colony of Saint Domingue, present-day Haiti. He later purchased his freedom, joined the army and fought alongside Toussaint L'Ouverture in the Haitian Revolution. In 1793, Belley was one of three representatives elected to the French Convention, becoming the first black deputy to take a seat. He delivered an impassioned speech there in 1794, when a unanimous decision was taken to abolish slavery.

Original portrait by an unknown artist.

Albert Badin 1747?–1822



Adolf Ludvig Gustav Fredrik Albert Badin, né Couchi, was a Swedish court-servant, secretary and diarist. Born in St Croix in the Danish West Indies, he was brought to Sweden in 1757 at the age of seven, and presented as a 'gift' to Louisa Ulrika of Prussia, Queen of Sweden. Well-educated and fluent in Swedish, French, German and Latin, Badin also served at the royal court as the Queen's Emissary to France on several occasions. He collected an extensive library consisting of 900 volumes, mostly in French, which makes him one of the first recorded book collectors of African origin.

Original painting by Gustaf Lundberg.

Omar Ibn Saïd 1770–1864



Omar Ibn Saïd, nicknamed Uncle Moreau and Prince Omeroh, was an Islamic scholar born to a wealthy family in Futa Toro, a northern province in modern-day Senegal, where he extensively studied arithmetic and theology with prominent Muslim scholars. He was taken captive during a military conflict, and brought to the United States in 1807. Although he remained enslaved for the rest of his life, he authored a series of works on history and theology, including fourteen manuscripts written in Arabic, and a memoir entitled *Autobiography of Omar Ibn Said, Slave in North Carolina*, 1831. He died in North Carolina in 1864.

Original portrait by an unknown artist.

Pedro Camejo 1790–1821



Pedro Camejo was born in San Juan de Payara, Venezuela. Better known as 'Negro Primero' or 'The First Black', he fought in the rebel army during the Venezuelan War of Independence, reaching the rank of lieutenant. He was one of the 150 lancers who participated in the Battle of Las Queseras del Medio (1819), for which he received the Order of Liberators of Venezuela. He died in the Battle of Carabobo on 24 June 1821, an event that led to the independence of Venezuela and the establishment of the Republic of Gran Colombia. Camejo was given the nickname 'Negro Primero' for his great weaponry skills, courage and bravery, fighting at the forefront of the battlefield.

Original sculpture by an unknown artist.

Frederick Douglass 1818–1895



Frederick Douglass was an African-American social reformer, statesman and abolitionist celebrated for his accomplished oratory and writing skills. After escaping from slavery in Maryland in 1838, he became a national leader of abolitionist movements in New York and Massachusetts. He wrote three acclaimed autobiographies detailing his experience as a slave: *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave* (1845), *My Bondage and My Freedom* (1855) and *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass* (1881). In 1847, he founded his own abolitionist newspaper, the *North Star*. Douglass made several trips to Europe, and during one of his visits to England he became legally free when British supporters raised funds to buy his freedom from his American owner. He was the most photographed American of the nineteenth century, and he is also remembered for being the first African-American to be nominated for the position of Vice President of the United States. A symbol for freedom, human rights, equality, Douglass also supported campaigns for women's suffrage.

Original portrait by Samuel J. Miller.

Kwasi Boakye 1827–1904



Kwasi Boakye was a Dutch mining engineer. Born a prince in the Ashanti Empire in modern-day Ghana, he was sent in 1837 by Ashanti King Kwaku Dua I to the Netherlands to receive an education at Delft University as part of wider negotiations between the Ashanti and the Dutch regarding the recruitment of Ashanti soldiers for the Dutch East Indies Army. Boakye graduated in 1847 and remained in the Netherlands until 1850, when he was sent to the Dutch East Indies. During his employment, he was discriminated against by his superior, for which he later received compensation. This included an estate in Java in present-day Indonesia, where he died in 1904. He was portrayed while studying at Freiburg University of Mining and Technology.

Original portrait by an unknown artist.

Dom Nicolau 1830?–1860



Dom Nicolau, Prince of Kongo, also known as Nicolau I Misakimia Nimi, was perhaps the earliest African leader to publicly denounce colonial influences. Not an heir to the throne, Nicolau was educated in Lisbon and Luanda, and joined the Portuguese civil service in Luanda in 1850. He protested against Portuguese commercial and political activity as well as military expansion by publishing a letter in a Portuguese newspaper in Lisbon in 1859. The publication of the letter directly imperilled his civil service career and he lost his life during his attempt to flee Angola. Contemporary engravings of Nicolau during his visit to Lisbon in 1845 suggest that he was then perhaps between fifteen and twenty years of age.

Original engraving by an unknown artist.

August Sabac El Cher 1836?–1885



August Sabac el Cher was born in Kurdufan, present-day Sudan. Orphaned after his father's death in a revolt against an Egyptian occupation force and his mother's subsequent suicide, he was presented as a 'gift' by the Ottoman Viceroy of Egypt to Prince Albrecht of Prussia in 1843. Named Sabac el Cher by Prince Albrecht, meaning 'good morning' in Arabic, he was raised at the Prussian royal court. He served as a valet and was the prince's constant companion, fighting in the Danish-Prussian War (1864), the Austro-Prussian War (1866) and the Franco-Prussian War (1870). Sabac el Cher held various senior positions in the royal service, married a German woman and was granted citizenship in 1882. Regarded as one of the earliest known Afro-Germans, he died in Berlin in 1885.

Original portrait by an unknown artist.

A Moroccan man 1913



José Tapiró y Baró (b. 1836–d. 1913) was a Spanish painter, best known for his watercolour portraits from Morocco. In 1871 he travelled to Tangier, which proved decisive for his career. He moved there permanently in 1876. Further details about the sitters he portrayed are unknown.

Original painting by José Tapiró y Baró.

Please note

The contextual information provided are intended as brief introductions to complex historical narratives, and in some cases may contain inaccuracies or inconsistencies.

We welcome any editorial suggestions that help fill gaps, expand our knowledge and/or correct these extended captions.