



Celebrating the 80th Anniversary of the Fifth Pan-African Congress



Spirit of Manchester
2025

Foreword

By: Keisha Thompson

The 5th Pan-African Congress was a pivotal event in the series of congresses. It was held in Manchester 80 years ago in 1945. It recreated momentum for the movement post World War 2. Subsequently, there was a flurry of countries achieving independence on the continent led by people who were in attendance in Manchester. The sixth congress took place in 1974 and was the first to happen on the continent in Tanzania. This shows how crucial the Manchester-hosted event was in the journey of Pan-Africanism.

Pan-Africanism is a very complicated concept. Its legacy and current presence on the continent and in diasporic communities encompasses a spectrum of political stand-points and aims – some that are in stark contrast to one another. However, this should not stop us from acknowledging what it meant to the people of Manchester 80 years ago and what it can mean for us now.

I am the Programme Manager for the Legacies of Enslavement team. It was set up to uphold the 10-year restorative justice strategy that The Scott Trust (owners of The Guardian) committed to in response to finding out about their colonial heritage. My remit is to raise consciousness around restorative justice in Manchester. A major part of my role is connecting with various organisations across the city region who are aligned with our values and efforts.

Which is why I was delighted when Spirit of Manchester Awards were happy to acknowledge this significant anniversary by theming this year's tables on the congress. Everyone in this room knows the power of going above and beyond to serve your community and strive to bring people together for social-cohesive and positive impact. We are an international city with an ever-expanding global reputation. We know that by building on our heritage of civic engagement whilst using culture as a conduit we can achieve brilliant things.

The 40th anniversary saw the Abasindi Women's Working Group erect a plaque on the Chorlton Medlock town hall building. The 50th anniversary was a cultural spectacular attracting brilliant speakers such as Nelson Mandela. It fitted into a wider national level cultural programme celebrating Pan-Africanism. The 70th anniversary saw a community-focused conference held by a cohort of local reparative justice actors. The 75th anniversary saw a wave of activities that were unfortunately mitigated by the aftermath of COVID 19.

Despite previous efforts, there is still work to be done for this piece of history to be more embedded in the Greater Manchester narrative. We need to be more coordinated and pragmatic in our approach so the Manchester population can make the link between how this history can inspire us to make economic progress in the current climate. We hope that by working with brilliant partners like Macc, we can do things differently. For me, this is a clear example of how the Legacies of Enslavement programme can ensure that we have positive examples of black Mancunian history to inspire us to address the legacies of our colonial history that are still impacting us all today.

Introduction

This year, as we celebrate the Spirit of Manchester, we are proud to mark the 80th anniversary of the 1945 Pan-African Congress, a defining moment in global history that took place right here in our city. Rooted in the ideals of Pan-Africanism– the belief in unity, solidarity, and liberation for people of African descent worldwide, the Congress brought together activists, thinkers, and leaders who shaped the course of anti-colonial struggles.

Manchester became a meeting ground not just of minds, but of movements, and of people who dared to imagine a decolonised world built on dignity, justice, and freedom.

To honour this legacy, each of our tables has been named after a prominent activist, thinker, or change-maker whose work either shaped the Pan-African Congress directly, echoed through Manchester in powerful ways, or influenced the wider Pan-African movement. These names are not just historical, but they represent the spirit of community organising, resistance, and hope that continues to live on in our neighbourhoods today.

Whether through politics, education, writing, or activism, everyone we've chosen left an undeniable impact on the struggle for liberation, and on Manchester's place in that story. By celebrating them, we also celebrate the resilience and strength of our communities, the ongoing fight for justice, and the collective spirit that binds us together.

Let this be a reflection and a reminder that Manchester has always been a city where global change begins.

Amy Ashwood Garvey

(1897 - 1969)

Amy Ashwood Garvey was a pioneering feminist, Pan-African organiser, and co-founder of the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). Born in Jamaica in 1897, she was a fierce advocate for Black self-determination, women's rights, and cultural pride long before these ideas were widely embraced in political circles.

Ashwood Garvey moved between Jamaica, the United States, West Africa, and Britain, using each city she lived in as a platform for activism. By the 1940s, she was living in London and working to grow the network of African, Caribbean, and African American activists who would organise the Fifth Pan-African Congress in Manchester. At a conference dominated by male voices, she stood out as a fierce advocate for inclusion, gender equity, and cultural identity as she chaired sessions and delivered speeches.

Her involvement was both political and deeply personal; having been married to Marcus Garvey, a pioneer in the Pan-Africanist Movement, Ashwood Garvey fought for their shared vision of Black liberation on her own terms. She emphasised that any struggle for justice must centre gender equality and community care.

Ashwood Garvey's used her voice to challenge gender hierarchies, her presence to demand inclusion, and her organising to make space for other Black women to lead.

T. Ras Makonnen

(1909 - 1983)

T. Ras Makonnen, born in British Guiana (now Guyana), was a Pan-African activist, publisher, and businessman, who shaped international liberation movements, despite him being relatively unknown. After studying in the United States, he lived in Europe, settling in Manchester from 1939 to 1955, during which time he became a central figure in Black political activism across the city.

Makonnen played a major role in organising the Fifth Pan-African Congress in Manchester in 1945. He also founded the Pan-Africa Magazine, opened a bookstore, and a publishing house. Deeply committed to global Black solidarity, Makonnen worked tirelessly to build networks between African, Caribbean, and African American communities. He helped organise lectures, study groups, and political gatherings that gave voice to anti-colonial ideas long before they became mainstream.

Seeing the need for spaces for Manchester's Black communities due to them being banned from entering pubs and restaurants due to the 'colour bar', Makonnen opened several venues that became meeting points for Black communities in the city, from seafarers to African American GIs during the Second World War. His income from his businesses meant he was able to help finance the Congress as well as secure the Chorlton-on-Medlock Town Hall as the venue for the Congress.

Makonnen's work helped turn Manchester into a hub for Pan-African debate and action, as well as creating community spaces that brought together Mancunians of African, Asian and Caribbean descent.

George Padmore

(1903 - 1959)

George Padmore was born in colonial Trinidad in 1903 as Malcolm Ivan Meredith Nurse, but it was under his chosen name that he became one of the most influential (if relatively little-known) Pan-African thinkers of the 20th century. After moving to the United States and then Moscow in his early years, Padmore became deeply involved in global anti-imperialist politics and the Communist Party. However, disillusioned with Stalinist repression, racism from fellow party members, and decreasing anti-colonial sentiment within the party, he left the Communist Party and re-centred his work on African liberation and Black unity.

Padmore settled in London, collaborating with T. Ras Makonnen and others to organise the historic Fifth Pan-African Congress in 1945. Held in Manchester, this event brought together future African leaders like Kwame Nkrumah and Jomo Kenyatta, and is widely recognised as a turning point in the decolonisation movement. Padmore's intellectual leadership and strategic clarity helped shape its demands for self-governance and racial equality. Padmore's writings, including "Pan-Africanism or Communism?" and grassroots organising helped link Black movements in the Caribbean to those in Africa, Europe, and the United States.

After learning of Padmore's early death, his friend and the leader of the newly-independent Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah, declared: "One day, the whole of Africa will surely be free and united and when the final tale is told, the significance of George Padmore's work will be revealed."

Kath Locke

(1928 - 1992)

Kath Locke was a pioneering community organiser, Black feminist, and activist who made a lasting impact in Manchester, particularly in the neighbourhood of Moss Side. Born in Manchester in 1928 to a family of African-Caribbean heritage, Locke spent her life creating space for people who were often excluded from public life, especially Black women and working-class communities.

In the 1970s, she co-founded the Abasindi Cooperative, a grassroots women's group that combined housing advocacy, health education, cultural workshops, and political education. For many Black women in Manchester, Abasindi became a lifeline, a space for empowerment, solidarity, and practical support. Locke was also deeply involved in anti-racism campaigns and pushed for greater recognition of Black history in education and public life.

Locke helped install a commemorative plaque for the 1945 Pan-African Congress in Manchester, connecting local activism to global anti-colonial struggles. The Kath Locke Centre in Moss Side, a hub for community health and wellbeing, now carries her name and honours her commitment to justice, healing, and collective care.

Kath Locke's life shows how one person, grounded in their local community, can shape a city's spirit of resistance and inclusion.

Professor Gus John

(1945 - Present)

Born in Grenada in 1945, Professor Gus John moved to the UK in the 1960s and became an influential voice in education, racial justice, and community organising. He made Manchester his home in the early 1970s, where he worked locally to improve housing, education, and youth support, especially in inner-city areas like Moss Side, as well as in Britain's other inner-city areas in Leicester, Birmingham and Glasgow.

John's early work in Manchester involved setting up supplementary schools and youth programmes to counter the exclusion and underachievement of Black children in mainstream education. A powerful speaker, writer, and activist, he challenged racism not just in institutions but in policy, pushing for systemic change in the way services were delivered to marginalised communities. Although John was born after the time of the Fifth Pan-African Congress in Manchester, he identifies as a 'lifelong Pan-Africanist'.

In 1989, he became the first Black Director of Education and Leisure Services in the UK. His influential book "Because They're Black" won the Martin Luther King Memorial Prize and remains a key text on institutional racism in British schools. More recently, he has done important work in university settings around education and decolonisation, amongst other topics.

Today, John is recognised not only for his academic work, but for his unwavering belief that justice must begin at the grassroots, and that education is a tool for liberation.

Len Johnson

(1902 - 1974)

Len Johnson, born in Manchester in 1902 to a working-class Irish mother and West African father, rose to become one of the UK's most skilled middleweight boxers in the 1920s and '30s. Despite winning over 90 fights in his professional career, he was barred from claiming official British titles due to the 'colour bar', a rule that prohibited non-white boxers from competing for national championships.

Rather than being defeated by racism, Johnson transformed it into fuel for his activism. After retiring from boxing, he became a committed communist and anti-racist organiser, fighting for equal rights in Manchester's working-class communities. He campaigned against the racist 'colour bar' in pubs and social spaces, successfully challenging discriminatory practices that excluded Black Mancunians.

An attendee at the Fifth Pan-African Congress held in Manchester in 1945, Johnson was also instrumental in bringing the legendary African-American singer and activist Paul Robeson to Manchester, creating solidarity between Black British and international movements. Today, Len Johnson is remembered as more than an athlete, he was a fighter for justice, whose legacy speaks to the power of persistence and pride in one's identity.

A mural in Manchester's Northern Quarter now honours his story and continues to inspire new generations. There is also currently a campaign underway to erect a statue of Johnson in Manchester.

SuAndi

(1951 - Present)

SuAndi is a trailblazing poet, performance artist, and arts curator who has spent decades championing Black British creativity, particularly in the North of England. Born in Hulme, Manchester to a British mother and Nigerian father, SuAndi uses her voice to explore identity, heritage, and the complexities of being Black and British.

Since the 1980s, SuAndi has played a major role in shaping the region's cultural landscape. As the Cultural Director of Black Arts Alliance, she has supported countless Black artists across the North West, creating space for stories that have often been sidelined. Her own performance work, including powerful autobiographical pieces like *The Story of M*, has toured internationally, blending poetry, family history, and social commentary.

In recent years, SuAndi has turned her creative lens toward Manchester's Pan-African legacy. She produced a series of short films exploring the Fifth Pan-African Congress of 1945, spotlighting its ongoing relevance to Manchester's Black communities today. Through interviews and visual storytelling, she helped revive public memory of this historic event and the city's role in global liberation movements.

SuAndi's work reminds us that activism doesn't only happen in the streets but it also lives in the stories we tell, the stages we build, and the art that holds our communities together.

Bankole Awoonor-Renner

(1898 - 1970)

Bankole Awoonor-Renner was a journalist, political thinker, and Pan-African activist from Sierra Leone, whose influence reached Manchester during a critical moment in the global struggle against colonialism. Born in 1898, Awoonor-Renner became one of West Africa's most outspoken anti-imperialist voices in the early 20th century. His sharp writing and advocacy through newspapers challenged the British rule and called for African self-determination.

In 1945, he was one of the key delegates at the Fifth Pan-African Congress in Manchester, an event that brought together major thinkers and future leaders of Africa's independence movements. Awoonor-Renner represented the West African Youth League (of which he was a co-founder), contributing insight into labour struggles, education access, and the need for media as a tool of liberation.

Awoonor-Renner's participation in the Congress, although less known than some of his contemporaries, helped bridge grassroots organising in West Africa with diaspora movements in the UK and contributed to its long-term impact. His legacy lives on in the continued fight for media justice, education, and unity among African and diasporic communities.

Constance Cummings- John

(1918 - 2000)

Constance Cummings-John was a Sierra Leonean educator, activist, and politician whose work bridged both Pan-African and feminist movements. Educated in the U.S. and U.K., she became politically active while living in London and later became the first African woman to become a mayor of a major African city.

Cummings-John was a fierce advocate for girls' education and women's rights, both in West Africa and across the African diaspora. Upon returning to Sierra Leone, she founded a school for girls and overcame political barriers by becoming the first woman elected to the Freetown City Council and later the city's first female mayor.

Throughout her life, she championed social justice, worker rights, and anti-colonialism, connecting the liberation of Africa with women's empowerment. While she did not attend the Fifth Pan-African Congress, she exemplified the intersection between Pan-Africanist thought and grassroots activism, creating schools and political networks to build both gender equality and decolonial movements.

Her legacy lives on as a symbol of Pan-African feminism, making her an important figure in political mobilisation and the story of international feminism that made its way to Manchester.

Peter Abrahams

(1919 - 2017)

Peter Abrahams was a South African novelist and journalist, whose writing explored themes of racial injustice, politics and interracial conflict and harmony. Born in Johannesburg in 1919 to an Ethiopian father and mixed-race South African mother, Abrahams left apartheid South Africa in 1939 for Europe, eventually making his way to the UK, where he became a powerful contributor to anti-colonial thought.

In 1945, he helped organise the Fifth Pan-African Congress held in Manchester, a landmark event that brought together future African heads of state, students, workers, and diaspora leaders to demand an end to colonial rule. As one of the youngest voices in the room, Abrahams offered a literary and personal perspective on the brutal realities of racism and segregation in South Africa, and the importance of unity across the African diaspora.

While in the UK, Abrahams published several important works, including *Mine Boy* (1946), one of the first African novels in English to gain international recognition. His writing combined political urgency with emotional depth, offering global readers a window into Black South African life.

While some critiqued his vision of interracial harmony as too idealistic, others argue that his writing questions the notion of interracial harmony. He later settled in Jamaica, where he wrote a history of the country.

Claudia Jones

(1915 - 1962)

Claudia Jones was a Black Caribbean journalist, feminist, and human rights activist. She was born in 1915 in Trinidad and migrated to the U.S. as a child where she later was known for her communist involvement and anti-racism work. Claudia was deported to the UK in 1955 due to her activism and involvement in the Communist Party of the USA.

During her time in Britain, Claudia began building networks for Black liberation and justice, vigorously campaigning and advocating for the Pan-African cause in Britain. Claudia's influence reached Manchester through her writing, public speaking, and connections to grassroots organising. She founded the West Indian Gazette, which was Britain's first Black newspaper, which provided a vital platform for Black voices during a time of intense racial inequality. It is believed that Claudia laid the groundwork for what would become the Notting Hill Carnival when she held an indoor Caribbean carnival, designed to bring people together to combat the tensions in the area after the Notting Hill riots.

Claudia's life and work echoed the spirit of the Fifth Pan-African Congress, which had taken place in Manchester a decade earlier. Like many of the Congress delegates, Claudia Jones believed in global Black solidarity, women's leadership, celebrating identity, and the power of media in liberation struggles. Claudia Jones is a remarkable figure in Black British history, a woman who recognised the multiple oppressions facing women and connected the struggles of Black women in the diaspora with the wider movement of anti-colonialism and anti-racism.

Raphael Armattoe

(1913 - 1953)

Dr. Raphael Armattoe was a Ghanaian physician, scientist, poet, and political thinker who brought a unique voice to the Pan-African movement. Born in 1913 in the Volta Region of the then Gold Coast (now Ghana), Armattoe trained in Europe and became a practicing doctor in Northern Ireland before engaging in anti-colonial politics across the UK.

In 1945, Armattoe was a prominent delegate at the Fifth Pan-African Congress in Manchester, contributing not just as a political advocate, but as a scientist and humanist concerned with health, justice, and self-determination for African nations. His voice added depth to the Congress's vision, connecting liberation with attention to governance, but also to wellbeing and education.

Armattoe was multilingual and intellectually versatile, a man of both the microscope and the manifesto. He was nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts in cultural diplomacy and racial justice.

Dr. Armattoe's involvement in the Fifth Pan-African Congress in Manchester reminds us that science, poetry, and politics can come together in the service of freedom, and that every movement needs thinkers who cross disciplines and borders.

Helen Noble Curtis

(1874 - 1961)

Helen Noble Curtis was an African American activist, lecturer, and one of the few women who attended multiple Pan-African Congresses as a representative. Born in the US in October 1874, she spent time in France and Liberia, which shaped her Pan-African ideology, anti-racist activism, and commitment to women's empowerment.

Despite not attending the Fifth Pan-African Congress in Manchester, she attended the first two Congresses where she used her platform as the only representative of Liberia to highlight the international solidarity of Black women's struggles against racism, colonialism, and gender inequality. Curtis' experiences of racism in France and the living conditions of African citizens that she saw in European colonies reinforced her commitment to combatting racism in the United States.

Curtis's involvement in the early Pan-African Congresses shines a light on the deep and often under-recognised labour of Black women in shaping global political change. She created space for women's voices and used her transatlantic perspective that was grounded in lived experience to advocate for a Pan-African ideal that real liberation leaves no one behind.

C.L.R James

(1901 - 1989)

Cyril Lionel Robert James, (C.L.R. James), was a Trinidadian intellectual, political activist and commentator, writer and pioneer in Black political thought. A strong influencer of postcolonial literature, James's views and writings spanned politics, global liberation movements, Black history, literature and sports.

Born in 1901, James spent much of the 1930s and 40s in the UK, initially in Lancashire working as a cricket journalist for the Manchester Guardian. In addition to his love for and participation in the sport, James also highlighted the racism and barriers within cricket. He later moved to London where his book, *The Black Jacobins* was published. A key work by James, *The Black Jacobins* tells the history of the Haitian Revolution. James' writing challenged ideas on Black resistance and leadership and influenced Black political thought. *The Black Jacobins* and the revolution it covered became a model for liberation movements around the world.

Although C.L.R. James did not attend the 1945 Pan-African Congress (he was in America at the time), James played a role in linking Kwame Nkrumah to George Padmore, two central organisers of the event, through a letter of introduction. His ideology, political and intellectual literature contributed to the wider Pan-African movement, with the thinking and works of C.L.R. James continuing to challenge and inspire today.

Amy Barbour-James

(1906 - 1988)

Amy Barbour-James was engaged in Britain's early Black activism and Pan-Africanist circles. Born in 1906 in London to Guyanese parents, she was the daughter of John Barbour-James who was a Pan-Africanist and community organiser who had served on the committee of the African Progress Union of London.

Amy Barbour-James served as Secretary of the League of Coloured Peoples in 1942, one of Britain's earliest Black civil rights organisations. The League campaigned for equal treatment across employment, housing, and healthcare. Her activism extended into her deep involvement in the African Progress Union.

Although not among the delegates of the 1945 Pan-African Congress in Manchester, Amy Barbour-James' work in education and women's advocacy intersected with the Congress's broader aims, particularly her commitment to equity, representation, and global Black solidarity.

In an era when Black women were often erased from public political life, Amy's contribution stands out as inspiration and resistance against the multiple systems of discrimination and oppression experienced by Black women.

Ernest Beoku-Betts

(1895 - 1957)

Ernest Beoku-Betts was a pioneering lawyer, judge, and political reformer from Sierra Leone whose legal brilliance and determination made him a respected figure in the Pan-African movement. He studied Law in England, gained a Bachelor of Civil Law, an M.A. degree from Durham, and his Bachelor of Law from London. He was called to the Bar (at the Middle Temple in London) in 1917.

Beoku-Betts rose to prominence in British West Africa as one of the first Africans to serve in senior judicial roles under colonial administration in the 1920s; a position he used not for personal advancement, but to push for systemic change. He became the vice president of the Legislative Council of Sierra Leone in 1927 and was the first Sierra Leonean to hold this post.

Outside the courtroom, he championed education, civic rights, and self-governance. He believed that African nations could and should manage their own legal systems, and he used his expertise to challenge the racist hierarchies embedded in colonial rule.

Beoku-Betts life and work sought to bridge African political ambition with judicial strategy. His contribution reminds us that decolonisation wasn't just about protest, it also required reimagining the very structures of law and governance.

Joe Appiah

(1918 - 1990)

Joseph (Joe) Emmanuel Appiah was a Ghanaian lawyer, politician, and diplomat whose early activism took root in the UK, including at the historic Fifth Pan-African Congress in Manchester in 1945. Born in 1918 into an influential Ashanti family, Appiah came to Britain for his education and quickly became actively involved with the West African Students' Union (WASU), one of the driving forces behind student-led anti-colonial activism.

At the Congress, Appiah stood alongside future African heads of state, such as Kwame Nkrumah, and intellectuals, calling for the end of colonial rule and racial oppression. Working together to increase West African unity, Joe Appiah and Kwame Nkrumah went to Paris to attract activists there. Later a London conference followed and the West African National Secretariat (WANS) was formed to continue to work towards West African national unity and Independence.

After returning to the Gold Coast, Appiah became a member of parliament and advisor during Ghana's early independence years. Although he had political differences with Kwame Nkrumah, Appiah remained committed to democratic governance and African unity.

Joe Appiah also helped shape international perspectives on Africa through his writing and diplomacy including time as Ghana's representative to the UN. In Manchester, Appiah's legacy reminds us of how student activism contributes to continental change.

Funmilayo Ransome-Kutti

(1900 - 1978)

Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti, "the Lioness of Lisabi", was a Nigerian educator, suffragist, and one of Africa's earliest and most fearless women's rights activists. Born in 1900 in Abeokuta, Nigeria, she trained as a teacher and became the first female student at Abeokuta Grammar School. She also studied in Cheshire, England, in 1920 at Wincham Hall College. Her lifelong commitment to justice, particularly for working-class women, continues to define her legacy.

She is reported to have been the only woman to join the Nigerian delegation to London to meet the Secretary of State in 1947 to formally protest the conditions of the colonies. In the same year, Funmilayo had one of her articles published in London in the British Communist Party paper, the Daily Worker. Her name is cited next to that of Kwame Nkrumah as a major influence on Pan-Africanism.

In Nigeria, Ransome-Kuti led thousands of market women in protests against unfair taxes and colonial rule, forming the Abeokuta Women's Union. She later campaigned for girls' education, women's suffrage, and Nigerian independence, earning national and international recognition.

Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti's name stands tall in Pan-African political history, not only against colonial injustice, but also on the gendered dimensions of oppression where African women were doubly silenced under empire and patriarchy.

I.T.A. Wallace Johnson

(1894 - 1965)

Isaac Theophilus Akunna (I.T.A.) Wallace-Johnson was a journalist, trade unionist, and political organiser from Sierra Leone speaking out across West Africa and the UK. Wallace-Johnson became one of the most fearless anti-colonial campaigners of his generation, known for challenging British imperialism head-on through both the press and the picket line.

By the 1930s, he was well known in Manchester and other British cities for his speeches and activism. A key member of the West African Students' Union (WASU), Wallace-Johnson linked African diaspora students with British labour and socialist movements. His work laid foundations for the 1945 Pan-African Congress, although he wasn't present at the Congress itself. His early influence helped shape the radical tone of the event, and his writings were widely circulated among Congress participants.

Wallace was one of the key members of in the International African Friends of Ethiopia, alongside other organisers of the Fifth Pan-African Congress. This organisation developed into a broader Pan-Africanist organisation called the International African Service Bureau (IASB) which was the organising centre for the Fifth Pan-African Congress in Manchester.

Wallace-Johnson later founded the West African Youth League, pushing for African self-rule, workers' rights, and civil liberties. He was arrested multiple times for his activism, a sign of how his words challenged colonial authorities. Wallace-Johnson's legacy lives on in movements that insist on justice for workers, dignity for the oppressed, and the power of independent journalism.

Makonnen Wolde Mikael

(1852 - 1906)

Makonnen Wolde Mikael, also known as Prince Makonnen, was an Ethiopian general who contributed to early Pan-African optimism and solidarity across the African diaspora. He was the father of future Emperor Haile Sellassie I.

Makonnen Wolde Mikael played a meaningful role in connecting Ethiopia's history of independence with Black liberation movements and inspiration in Europe during the Ethiopian victory in the first Italo-Ethiopian War.

The Ethiopian victory held symbolic importance as one of the few African nations to have resisted European colonisation. This outcome played a part in shaping the political mood at the time and later in providing inspiration to Pan-African movements. Ethiopia stood as a symbol of African independence during a time of colonialism across the continent.

Ethiopia's resistance was held up as a rallying point, a reminder that African sovereignty was possible, and worth fighting for. The Italo-Ethiopian War linked African history to global Black identity and pride. Makonnen's role symbolises the enduring cultural and political connection of the Pan-African struggle for dignity and self-rule.

Efua Sutherland

(1924 - 1996)

Efua Sutherland was a Ghanaian playwright, teacher and cultural activist. Her influence and work transformed how African stories were told and who told them. Born in 1924 in Cape Coast, she studied in Ghana and the UK, before returning home to devote her life to children's education, theatre and cultural heritage.

Though she rose to prominence after the Fifth Pan-African Congress of 1945, Sutherland was likely deeply inspired by the Congress's vision of African self-determination and cultural pride. Her time in the UK coincided with the climate of Pan-African activism in London.

Efua founded the Ghana Experimental Theatre and helped create Ghana's first publishing house for children, supporting grassroots literacy campaigns across West Africa. At an official opening event, President Kwame Nkrumah, a key Pan-African thinker and independence leader, gave a speech in support of artistic culture and Pan-Africanism, underlining the importance of her work.

Efua's work helped shape Ghana's national identity through the arts. Her work echoes its goals centring African voices, languages, and traditions in a time when colonial education systems often devalued them. She believed that liberation wasn't just political but also cultural.

Today, her legacy lives on in the generations of writers, artists, and educators she inspired, reminding us that art and culture go hand-in-hand with political activism.

Alphaeus Hunton

(1903 - 1970)

Alphaeus Hunton was an African American academic, writer, and civil rights organiser whose internationalism connected him to the Pan-African thinkers influencing Manchester in the 1940s. Born in 1903 in Atlanta, Georgia, Hunton was educated at Harvard and New York University before becoming a key figure in the Council on African Affairs, a U.S. based organisation that highlighted the interconnection between racism in America and colonialism across the continent of Africa.

While Hunton did not attend the Fifth Pan-African Congress in Manchester, his activism and ideology influenced the transatlantic networks that shaped the event. He worked closely with Paul Robeson and W.E.B. Du Bois, both of whom were central to shaping the Congress's focus and outcomes. Hunton's writing linked African American struggles with decolonisation movements in Africa and the Caribbean, reinforcing the idea that racism and colonialism were elements of connected global capitalist systems.

In the 1960s, he moved to newly independent Guinea and later Ghana, continuing his work on Pan-African education, activism, and liberation until his death in 1970. Hunton's ideological legacy continues on in movements that espouse international solidarity that is grounded in justice, dignity, and unity.

Kwame Nkrumah

(1909 - 1972)

Kwame Nkrumah was a revolutionary thinker, organiser, and the first president of Ghana. Born in 1909 in the Gold Coast (modern-day Ghana), Nkrumah studied in the U.S. before arriving in the UK in the 1940s, where he became a driving force in Pan-African politics and activism.

In 1945, Nkrumah helped organise the Fifth Pan-African Congress in Manchester, a defining moment in anti-colonial history. He played a central role in shaping the Congress' radical political strategy and helped unify the grassroots resistance movements of future leaders from across Africa and the Caribbean through their shared demand for liberation.

During his time in Manchester, he worked alongside activists like T. Ras Makonnen and George Padmore, helping to build links between diaspora communities and independence movements abroad. Nkrumah's time in Manchester surrounded, by fellow Pan-African theorists, was central to shaping his belief in a Pan-African independence movement.

After returning to the Gold Coast, Nkrumah led the country's independence movement and transformation into modern-day Ghana in 1957. His journey from Manchester meeting halls to Ghana's presidency made him a symbol of what Pan-Africanism could achieve when it is rooted in global solidarity, anti-capitalism, and decolonisation.

Margaret Ekpo

(1914 - 2006)

Margaret Ekpo was a Nigerian activist, educator, and political leader whose work laid the foundation for women's involvement in politics across West Africa. She was a trained teacher and later studied domestic science in Dublin, but her true calling emerged in grassroots organising.

In the 1940s and 1950s, Margaret Ekpo became a bold voice in Nigeria's anti-colonial movement, using her platform to campaign not just for independence, but for gender equality and economic justice. Though she wasn't present at the 1945 Pan-African Congress in Manchester, her activism was deeply aligned with its values, a belief in African sovereignty, dignity, and the power of collective organising.

Margaret's work and activism aligned with Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti. Both women encouraged more Black women to involve themselves in politics to be voices on national issues and also spoke out on universal suffrage.

Margaret co-founded the Aba Women's Association, mobilising thousands of market women to challenge both colonial policies and male-dominated leadership. In 1961, she made history as one of the first women elected to Nigeria's regional parliament, not as a symbolic gesture, but as a true political force.

Margaret Ekpo's legacy is one of courage, strategy, and fierce community loyalty.

Jomo Kenyatta

(1897 - 1978)

Jomo Kenyatta was a Kenyan nationalist, writer, and political organiser who was the first prime minister, and then president, of independent Kenya. Before he led a nation, Kenyatta was a student and activist in Britain, deeply involved in the intellectual and political circles that shaped African liberation movements.

Born in 1897 in British East Africa (now Kenya), Kenyatta arrived in the UK in the 1920s and quickly became an influential voice within the Pan-African movement. He studied anthropology at the London School of Economics, where his academic research and political organising emphasised the importance of land rights, cultural recognition, and self-rule for independence movements.

In 1945, Kenyatta was a key delegate at the Fifth Pan-African Congress in Manchester, alongside other future African leaders like Kwame Nkrumah and Hastings Banda. Together, they helped shape the Congress's embrace of nationalist movements as central to ending colonial rule.

Kenyatta's involvement in Manchester marked the end of his shift from intellectual debate to political mobilisation. He returned to Kenya shortly after and led the country's decolonial movement for more than fifteen years, culminating with Kenya's independence in 1963 and his election to the presidency in 1964.

Dr Hastings Kamuzu Banda

(1898 - 1997)

Dr Hastings Kamuzu Banda was a medical doctor, Pan-African thinker, and political leader who became the first president of an independent Malawi. Before returning to Africa to lead a nationalist independence movement, Banda spent several years in Britain, where he engaged with African and Caribbean activists calling for the end of colonial rule.

Born in 1898 in what was then Nyasaland (now Malawi), Banda studied in the United States before moving to the UK to continue his medical studies. In 1945, he took part in the Fifth Pan-African Congress alongside other future leaders like Kwame Nkrumah and Jomo Kenyatta, who shaped the event's advocacy for self-determination and rejection of the gradual reform supported by colonial powers.

His time in Manchester exposed him to some of the most influential figures in Pan-African politics, and those connections helped shape the trajectory of Nyasaland's transformation into modern-day Malawi. Upon returning to Nyasaland in 1958, Banda led his political party through several confrontations with the colonial authority, eventually winning office in 1961 and achieving independence in 1964. While Banda's early activism was rooted in democratic ideals and commitment to Pan-African liberation, his presidency is now defined by its authoritarian rule and human rights abuses.

Adelaide Smith Casely

Hayford

(1868-1960)

Adelaide (nee Smith) Casely Hayford was a Victorian feminist born in Freetown, Sierra Leone. Adelaide studied music in Germany during her teenage years and spent much of her early life in Britain and later moved several times between Britain and Sierra Leone. She returned to Sierra Leone in 1892 to teach and gained an international reputation as a leading Pan-Africanist and feminist thinker, writer, educator, and public speaker.

Whilst travelling the United States in 1920, she gave lectures to raise awareness of the educational reform needed in Africa and spoke out for women's rights. Her speeches addressed American misinformation about African society, and Adelaide was known for including elements of African dress, culture and traditions in her presentations. In 1923 Adelaide established the Girls' Vocational and Training School in Freetown, which was one of the first institutions to provide education to young girls. Adelaide also joined the Universal Negro Improvement Association, where she took up a leading role to assert the rights of African women.

Although she did not attend the Manchester 1945 Pan-African Congress, Adelaide had attended the Fourth Pan-African Congress in New York City in 1927. Adelaide Smith Casely Hayford should be remembered for her pioneering work in education and women's rights. She was deeply committed to Pan-Africanism and improving opportunities for Black women.

W.E.B. Du Bois

(1868 - 1963)

W.E.B. Du Bois was a political theorist, writer, and activist who shaped generations of anti-racist, anti-colonial, and Pan-African thought. Born in Massachusetts in 1868, he became the first African American to earn a doctorate from Harvard and spent his life fighting against white supremacy and capitalism, both in the United States and internationally.

By the 1940s, Du Bois was one of the Pan-Africanist movement's defining voices, having founded the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People and organised several meetings of the Pan-African Congress. Du Bois emphasises that the struggle for Black liberation was a global movement. Through his various books and magazines, he connected the experiences of African Americans with colonial subjects around the world.

At the age of 77, Du Bois was the keynote attendee at the Fifth Pan-African Congress in Manchester, with activists from colonies from around the world coming together to build on his ideology. Manchester gave him a stage to establish Pan-Africanism as a political movement grounded in self-determination, independence, and international solidarity.

Du Bois' political theory, outlining the interconnected systems of colonialism, racism, and capitalism, continues to influence academics and activists to this day.

Dr Peter Milliard

Dr Peter Milliard was a British Guiana-born medical doctor who opened a surgery in Salford in 1924 and played a central role in introducing Pan-Africanism to Manchester. After studying at Howard University in the US, Milliard worked in Panama and moved to Manchester at the end of the First World War, when he set up his surgery to support the city's Black population.

Credited with developing a support network for Manchester's African students and workers, Milliard's work attracted prominent Pan-African activists to the city, including T. Ras Makonnen. In 1944, Makonnen and Milliard founded the Pan African Federation, laying the foundation and mobilising support for the city to host the Fifth Pan-African Congress the following year. While other European cities were suggested, the organisers decided on Manchester, as it had developed into the strongest centre of Pan-African organisation in Britain thanks to Milliard's extensive work.

Milliard was deeply committed to Pan-African activism and directly supported anti-colonial struggles across the continent, fundraising and raising awareness through speaking at street meetings in Stevenson Square. While his legacy is limited in geographic scope compared to some of his fellow attendees, Milliard played a critical role in fostering the local support and network of activists that shaped the Fifth Pan-African Congress in Manchester.

Anna J. Cooper

(1858 - 1964)

Anna Julia Cooper was a writer, educator, and one of the most prominent early Black feminist scholars. Born into slavery in North Carolina in 1858, her life and activism were defined by combatting both racial and gender barriers in education, as she would go on to earn a PhD from the Sorbonne in Paris.

Her 1892 book, *A Voice from the South*, argued that Black women's experiences were essential to highlighting both racial and gender injustices in the US. It was one of the first texts to centre Black women's voices in political theory, decades ahead of its time.

Though she never lived in Manchester, Cooper's ideas travelled across the Atlantic and resonated with Pan-African thinkers in Britain. Her insistence that education, dignity, and self-determination were fundamental tools of liberation helped shape the broader ideological backdrop against which the Fifth Pan-African Congress unfolded.

Anna Julia Cooper spent her life creating educational institutions, mentoring students, and centring the lived experience of Black women. Her clear articulation of the connections between racial and gender inequalities helped shape the reform of social services, education systems, and political movements.

Jaja Wachuku

(1918 - 1996)

Jaja Anucha Wachuku was a Nigerian lawyer, diplomat, and Pan-Africanist who became his country's first Foreign Minister following independence. Born in colonial Nigeria in 1918, Wachuku won scholarships to study law at Trinity College Dublin in 1939, where he excelled and served as president of the African Students Association of Dublin (ASAD) in 1944.

In 1945, Wachuku represented ASAD at the Fifth Pan-African Congress in Manchester, joining future African leaders such as Kwame Nkrumah and Jomo Kenyatta, along with the prominent Pan-African thinker W.E.B. Du Bois. This experience shaped his political vision. After returning to Nigeria in 1947, he founded the radical New Africa Party in 1949 to spread Pan-African ideas, which was praised for continuing Du Bois's ideological legacy.

Wachuku played a crucial role in Nigeria's peaceful independence movement, later serving as the country's first UN Ambassador and Foreign Minister. In this capacity, his diplomatic intervention successfully pressured Western governments to prevent South Africa from executing Nelson Mandela during the Rivonia Trial in 1963.

Throughout his career, Wachuku remained committed to the Pan-African ideals he first encountered in Manchester, using Nigeria's position as the world's largest Black nation to combat racism globally and champion African liberation movements across the continent.

Dudley Joseph Thompson

(1917 - 2012)

Dudley Thompson was a Jamaican lawyer, politician, and Pan-Africanist who became a leading advocate for African-Caribbean solidarity. Born in Panama in 1917 and raised in Jamaica, Thompson served as one of Britain's first Black pilots in the RAF Bomber during World War II, earning several medals of distinction for his service.

In 1945, Thompson attended the Fifth Pan-African Congress in Manchester alongside future African leaders including Kwame Nkrumah, Jomo Kenyatta, Jaja Wachuku, and preeminent Pan-African political thinker W.E.B. Du Bois. His exposure to the international attendees and diverse political views shaped his lifelong commitment to Pan-African ideals.

After studying at Oxford as a Rhodes Scholar and qualifying as a barrister in 1950, Thompson practised law across Africa, becoming deeply involved in nationalist movements. His commitment to Pan-Africanist movements and solidarity led him to defend prominent nationalist leaders in both Tanzania and Kenya in court against prosecution from colonial powers. As a senior minister and later as Jamaica's ambassador to several African nations,

Thompson continued his dedication to the Pan-African vision that was shaped by his time in Manchester, working tirelessly to strengthen the political and community ties between Africa and the Caribbean.

Shirley Graham Du Bois

(1896 - 1977)

Shirley Graham Du Bois was a writer, composer, and political organiser who was deeply involved in freedom struggles from civil rights in the U.S. to Pan-African liberation movements across Africa and the Caribbean. Born in Indiana in 1896, she was an accomplished artist and intellectual and later married W.E.B. Du Bois, one of Pan-Africanism's leading thinkers.

In the 1940s and '50s, she was immersed in Black internationalist networks that connected the African diaspora with independence movements abroad. While she didn't attend the Fifth Pan-African Congress in Manchester in 1945, her work advocating for liberation and international solidarity through literature and art helped energise its organisers and the wider movement.

A passionate speaker and cultural diplomat, Graham Du Bois was known for linking politics with creativity. She wrote biographies of key Black historical figures, composed operas, and used storytelling as a tool for liberation. After moving to Ghana and renouncing her American citizenship, she became a close advisor to Kwame Nkrumah, the first president of independent Ghana and prominent attendee of the Fifth Pan-African Congress in Manchester.

Graham Du Bois later moved to Egypt and then China, always aligning herself with liberation struggles and anti-colonial politics.

Marcus Garvey

(1887 - 1940)

Marcus Garvey was a Jamaican-born activist and politician who organised the first major American Black nationalist movement and became one of the most influential Pan-Africanist thinkers of the early 20th century. Largely self-taught, Garvey founded the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) in Jamaica in 1914, advocating for African independence and the establishment of a Black-governed nation in Africa.

After moving to the United States in 1916, Garvey established UNIA branches in Harlem and other northern cities, claiming a following of approximately 2 million people by 1919. Garvey's radical political mobilisation meant that he was persecuted by the United States Government, ending in his eventual arrest and deportation back to Jamaica.

Though Garvey died before the Fifth Pan-African Congress in Manchester, his contrasting ideology to W.E.B. Du Bois and other Pan-African leaders made him a critical element in the movement's development. Garvey championed Black separatism, mass mobilisation of working-class people, Black pride, and African repatriation, influencing generations of Pan-Africanist thinkers and activists.

His first wife, Amy Ashwood Garvey, was a powerful political activist in her own right and was central to the organisation and focus of the Fifth Pan-African Congress in Manchester.

Amy Jacques Garvey

(1903 - 1970)

Amy Jacques Garvey was a Jamaican activist, journalist, and feminist who became a leading voice in the Pan-African and Black nationalist movements of the early 20th century. Born in Kingston to a politically engaged family, Jacques Garvey was deeply committed to social justice from an early age.

At thirteen, she joined the Universal Negro Improvement Association, founded by Marcus Garvey, a central figure in the Pan-African movement, whom she later married. Her influence extended beyond her relationship to Garvey, as she developed into a political leader in her own right, articulating a Pan-African vision of economic empowerment, cultural identity, and gender equality. Jacques Garvey established an international organisation of nurses to provide healthcare and education to Black communities, exemplifying her belief that true security required addressing economic, social, and political empowerment alongside physical safety.

Though Jacques Garvey did not attend the Fifth Pan-African Congress, her pioneering work in connecting feminism with Pan-Africanism significantly influenced the movement's development. She challenged traditional gender roles in Black liberation struggles, arguing that Black women's experiences of oppression uniquely positioned them to lead global liberation efforts. Jacques Garvey's approach to Pan-Africanism helped cement women's liberation as central to the struggle of Black self-determination and connected the movement to future generations of feminists.