

HIDDEN STORIES OF BLACK BRITONS GO LIVE AS DIGITAL MONUMENTS IN TRAFALGAR SQUARE

Camera company Snap has partnered with Black Cultural Archives to bring untold Black British stories in augmented reality

London, 11th February: Snap today announced the launch of its 'Hidden Black Stories' project, in partnership with the Black Cultural Archives, that will unveil hidden stories of Black British and Black people in the U.K. through Augmented Reality (AR) alongside Nelson Mandela's granddaughter Tukwini Mandela.

Research conducted by Snap, the Black Cultural Archives and Research Without Borders found that on average, less than a third of Brits recognise famous historical black figures (32%), about half the level of those that recognise similarly important famous white figures (63%).

And in terms of how people learn about Black history, only a fifth (21%) said school was where they found out the most, with TV and streaming (43%), the news (38%) and books and libraries (33%) being higher. In fact, Brits are as likely to find out about important black figures from social media (21%).

In an example of Snap's large scale 'Local Lens' technology first demoed on Carnaby Street, the whole of Trafalgar Square will become an immersive history lesson - telling Snapchatters the stories of Black British History that live behind the more famous monuments of the iconic London location.

Lisa Anderson, Managing Director (Interim), Black Cultural Archives said: "We are thrilled to be working with Snapchat on such an important initiative. Black Cultural Archives exists to collect, preserve and champion the histories of African and Caribbean people in Britain, so the opportunity to recognise these stories through cutting edge AR technology that reaches younger audiences is both exciting and powerful. British History is full of incredible Black people and hidden stories that deserve to be told. This Trafalgar square lens is a dynamic, virtual sign of recognition, the second in a series through which Snapchatters will be able to learn about people they may not have heard of or know very little about."

The location and stories shared have been selected by a panel of experts from Slavery Remembrance, Black History Walks, Nubian Jak Trust, Mary Seacole Trust and 100 Great Black Britons, and include:

- **Four Black British established and up and coming artists** will be hung on the National Gallery to help raise awareness and redress the fact that according to the Black Artists and Modernism National Collection Audit only 2,000 artworks in the UK's permanent art collections are by Black artists and most of them are not on display. In comparison, the National Gallery alone contains 2300+ artworks and there are 200,000 oil paintings in the UK's national collection. The artworks will be displayed alongside a curatorial note giving more detail about their work.
- **A boxing ring to represent Bill Richmond and Tom Molineaux**, two Black boxers who lived in the 1700-1800s. Unknown to most, the gym that Bill Richmond trained out of, stood in Trafalgar Square, near Nelson's Column, and was demolished around the time the monument was erected. Tom Molineaux, an American, was his protégé.

- **Highlighting a Black sailor said to be George Ryan depicted on Nelson’s Column**, in recognition of the integral and unsung role Black sailors played in Nelson’s victory at Trafalgar.
- **Near the Fourth Plinth will display a statue of the revolutionary Nelson Mandela** whose powerful *Make Poverty History* speech, which took place in 2005 in Trafalgar Square, can be heard when viewing the Lens.

Unveiled with Nelson Mandela’s granddaughter, Tukwini Mandela, the AR experience will be permanent and has been timed to coincide with the release of Mandela from Robben Island 32 years ago. It is aimed to encourage ongoing education and attention on Black British History and not just restricting it to one month a year in October

Tukwini Mandela said: “I’m here today to see my grandfather’s statue being brought to life through amazing AR technology in London’s Trafalgar Square. Today is the anniversary of my grandfather’s release from prison, so it means even more to me and I couldn’t be more excited that Snap and the Black Cultural Archives have invited me to attend as part of their mission to make black history more visible, so it’s never forgotten.”

For those unable to travel to London, Snap has also launched a national lens that brings Nelson Madela’s statue to life in front of you, wherever you are.

The expert panel also chose the sculpture of Mary Seacole as a key story to bring to life. Despite her being voted the greatest Black Briton in 2004, her statue saw a lot of opposition and only after campaigning for 12 years was it finally erected in 2016. The Landmarker Lens brings her sculpture to life bringing colour to the globe behind.

Ed Couchman, UK General Manager at Snap Inc. said: “Events over the last few years have ignited a global conversation about racial equity. In the UK, there was a particular focus on how race is represented in British History: how it is taught in schools and how it is celebrated in statues or landmarks up and down the country. There has been a lot of debate - sometimes quite heated - that the less positive historical context is missing from celebratory plaques or statues. And that many key Black British historic figures and stories are completely non-existent.”

Today also marks the launch of the final two Lenses in a series made in partnership with Black creative collective, Kugali Media to commemorate Black British individuals with AR statues. The first, launched in June, recognised four of the country's most influential footballers. The two new Lenses focus on healthcare workers and educators and are available worldwide on Snapchat.

ENDS

Notes to Editors:

Press contact: Sheeraz Gulsher - sgulsher@snapchat.com

How to find and use the lenses

Trafalgar Square and Mary Seacole

- You need to be in the vicinity of the area and can either

- Find the lens in the lens carousel, or
- Go to the Snap Map and tap on the marker

Nelson Mandela

- Open the Snapchat app and take a photograph of the below code to unlock the Lens (this can be used anywhere):



Trafalgar Square Hidden Black Stories

- Open the Snapchat app and take a photograph of the below code to unlock the Lens. This Lens will only work in London's Trafalgar Square:



Kugali Lenses

- Search for KugaliMedia on Snapchat to unlock the Lenses called 'BlackBritishPlayer' (football), 'BlackBritishNurses' (healthcare) and 'Black Educators'(education).

Additional context on historical figures

- **Nelson Mandela's** Make Poverty History speech was made in London's Trafalgar Square in 2005 to end global inequality.
- **Tom Molineaux** an American born into slavery, was said to have won his freedom in a boxing match. He then moved to England and became Richmond's protege. His most famous fight was with the Tom Cribb
- **Bill Richmond** was Britain's first Black sporting superstar. In 1810 his pub and boxing gym, the Horse and Dolphin, was a stone's throw from Nelson's Column
- **George Ryan** is said to be the person depicted on Nelson's Column, a Black sailor who fought for Britain at the Battle of Trafalgar. His presence is a rare occurrence of a Black person in mid-Victorian public sculpture.

Artists and work on display on the National Gallery

- **'Relic Traveller: Phase 1' by Larry Achiampong.** Achiampong's (b. 1984, London, UK) projects use imagery, aural and visual archives to explore identity in the digital age. This work forms part of Relic Traveller: Phase 1, a multi-disciplinary project manifesting in performance, audio, moving image and prose.
- **'Night Night' by Kay Davis.** Davis (b. 1990, London, UK), is a multidisciplinary British-Jamaican artist from South London whose practice draws on Surrealism, Afrofuturism and Space. She depicts Black joy, through girlhood and children existing happily. Davis is inspired by bright colours, adornment, and childhood nostalgia. Her use of vibrant and dreamy backgrounds stems from her BA in Textile Design and Caribbean heritage.
- **'Section 60' by Linnet Panashe.** Panashe (b. 1991, Harare, Zimbabwe) was inspired to create this piece to raise awareness of the inequitable impact of changes made to Section 60 of the UK's Criminal Justice Act. The issue of race is not just an "American problem", it is an issue experienced by Black people all over the world.
- **'Diary of a Victorian Dandy: 19.00 hours' by Yinka Shonibare CBE RA.** Shonibare (b.1962, London, UK) is a British-Nigerian artist based in London, he uses citations of Western art history and literature to question the validity of contemporary cultural and national identities within the context of globalization. He has exhibited internationally, his work is held in notable museums including the TATE London, the MOMA and the Smithsonian Institute.

Additional commentary:

Tony Warner of Black History Walks said: "This initiative is a good example of how high tech, and a big company can engage with Black history outside of the usual suspects. Dynamic, interactive and permanent, our untold British history deserves more such initiatives."

Trevor Sterling, Chair of Mary Seacole Trust said: "At the Mary Seacole Trust we are delighted to be working in collaboration with Snapchat in respect of this powerful initiative which will highlight the significant contributions from Black communities in caring for our nation. This not only compliments the statue of Mary Seacole unveiled at St Thomas's hospital in 2016 but also the Memorial plaque unveiled at St Thomas's in 2017, dedicated to honour those healthcare workers who have dedicated themselves to aiding others in times of war, conflict and catastrophe throughout history. It is incredibly important that we remember and celebrate such inspirational Black figures who deserve their place in history, we are grateful to Snapchat for using augmented reality to do so."

Patrick Vernon OBE co-author of 100 Great Black Britons said: "This is such an important initiative and campaign to highlight that key monument in the public realm also have a connection to Black British history. I see this as start to do more work to amplify this important heritage to educate and inform the public and tourist."

Shezal Laing, Founder of Slavery Remembrance said: "This is a great initiative to showcase the hidden history of Britain and highlight these important historical British figures, along with spotlighting the impact Black Britons had on shaping this country. Snapchat also did it the right way, working with and listening to rooted Black community organisations in the field to select the heroes to be recognised and Black media company, Kugali, to produce the AR. I am excited to see this project come to life."