Claudia Jones and the Notting Hill Carival

Claudia Jones was a political **activist** and journalist and has been called the 'mother' of the Notting Hill Carnival.

Claudia's Early Life

Claudia was born in Trinidad in 1915. At the age of eight, she and her family migrated to New York City and settled in the area of Harlem.

The living conditions in Harlem were damp and overcrowded; this caused Claudia to develop an infectious disease called tuberculosis when she was 17 years old. The illness forced Claudia to spend a year in hospital before completing her final term of schooling.

Activism

Claudia became very interested in communism: a form of politics where the state or government owns things like mines, factories and farms and money is shared equally among people. Claudia began work in 1937 as a journalist for a communist newspaper.

Claudia soon became a well-known communist campaigner and public speaker. The US government at the time didn't agree with communism so Claudia was imprisoned for her activities. While she was in prison, Claudia suffered from severe ill health related to her childhood tuberculosis and was cared for in hospital before being sent back to prison.

Claudia's Arrival in London

In 1955, Claudia was **deported** to the United Kingdom. She arrived in London at a time when Black people in the UK were experiencing **discrimination**. Many people had arrived from the Caribbean in the 1940s as part of, what was known as, the Windrush Generation (after the boat that brought the first group from the Caribbean). Although the Windrush Generation had been invited to the UK by the government in order to help rebuild the country after the Second World War, they faced difficulties getting jobs, finding places to live and being accepted in society.

Claudia began campaigning against racism and for fairer treatment of **immigrants**. In 1958, Claudia started the West Indian Gazette newspaper where she wrote about the struggles of Black immigrants in the UK.

Claudia was a gifted student and, while in hospital, she continued to read and research and was particularly interested in politics.

The Notting Hill Carnival

The Notting Hill Carnival is now one of the largest carnivals in the world and attracts over one million visitors every year. The colourful and multicultural event is held over the August bank holiday weekend and centres around a carnival parade of colourful floats. Around 50, 000 costumed dancers and performers are accompanied by the sounds of calypso and steel band music.

In 2020, the Notting Hill Carnival was cancelled for the first time, owing to the COVID-19 pandemic. Instead, an online event was held.

'Claudia's Caribbean Carnival'

Following several violent incidents in Notting Hill and Nottingham, Claudia organised a carnival to unite British Black people and to lift their spirits. In 1959, the first Caribbean Carnival (often called 'Claudia's Caribbean Carnival') was held inside St Pancras Hall. The event celebrated West Indian heritage and culture with music and dancing and was broadcast on BBC television.

The carnival was such a success that it became a yearly event. A few years later, the carnival turned into an outdoor procession which became known as the Notting Hill Carnival.

Claudia's Legacy

Claudia played a key role in promoting racial equality in the US and in the UK, despite facing many challenges. Through the Notting Hill Carnival, Claudia brought Caribbean culture to the masses and the yearly event serves as a vibrant reminder of the importance of diversity.

Glossary

activist: A person who works hard to try and bring about change.

deported: When a person is forced by the government to leave a country.

discrimination: When a person or group is treated differently by others because of reasons such as their skin colour, race or ethnicity.

immigrants: People who come to live permanently from a foreign country.

Questions

1. Number the events from 1-4 to show the order in which they occur in the text.

   - [ ] Claudia and her family migrated to New York City.
   - [ ] The Notting Hill Carnival was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
   - [ ] The first Caribbean Carnival was held inside St Pancras Hall.
   - [ ] Claudia was deported to the United Kingdom.

2. The first Caribbean Carnival was held at St Pancras _____. Tick one.

   - ○ Conference Centre
   - ○ Stadium
   - ○ Hall
   - ○ station

3. What is the name of the type of politics that Claudia was involved with?

   _____

4. Find and copy a phrase that shows that Claudia demonstrated exceptional ability at school.

   _____

5. Where was the first Caribbean Carnival broadcast?

   _____

6. Look at the section called **Claudia's Arrival in London**.
   Summarise the information in the section using one sentence.

   _____

   _____

   _____

7. Explain why Claudia may have thought that a carnival would lift people's spirits.

8. **Claudia...has been called the 'mother' of the Notting Hill Carnival.**
   Explain why she may have been given this name.

9. Discuss why you think Claudia was important in 30 words or fewer.