

CHRISTMAS EDITION

NOV / DEC 2024

A PLATFORM FOR THE BLACK COMMUNITY

STICKS & STONES



be inspired

be empowered

be enlightened

2024 *in retrospect*

Sheet: 1

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editorial

It's been an eventful year

We are at the closing stages of 2024, and what a year it's been. Looking back, I am actually startled that all these big events happened in the last twelve months. There were two big elections in the UK and in the USA, with both countries witnessing a change of guard.

Donald Trump is back at The White House, while here in the UK, Kier Starmer led an impressive victory for Labour which saw the party return to power after 14 years away. In South Africa, the African National Congress lost their majority after dominating South African politics since winning in the first post-apartheid elections 30 years ago. Botswana also experienced a significant shift in power. The Botswana Democratic Party (BDP) - in power since independence in 1966 lost the election and the country is now run by the Umbrella for Democratic Change (UDC).

In the summer, The Paris 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games became a historic milestone, breaking records for participation, attendance and medals as the city united in a vibrant celebration of diversity and sport.

Elsewhere, the wars in Ukraine and in Gaza have continued to rage on, and no solution is in sight. Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo remain on the peripherals of media attention. Our hope is that 2025 will bring an end to these conflicts and that all displaced people can return to their homes.

In this edition we reflect on some key stories we covered in 2024. We remain committed to being that trusted platform for the Black community in the North East of England.

It's easy to lose focus during the last weeks of the year, but ending on a high note can set a positive tone for the next one. Let's build momentum and welcome a happier, healthier new year! Take time to acknowledge your accomplishments and learn from challenges. Celebrate what went well and think about how to build on those successes next year. Reflecting on lessons from tough moments helps you forgive mistakes and move forward.

After tying up loose ends, don't forget to rest.



Partners



Middlesbrough



Teesside Archives

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Nov / Dec 2024

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DON'T LET MATHS HOLD YOU BACK

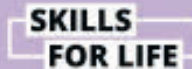
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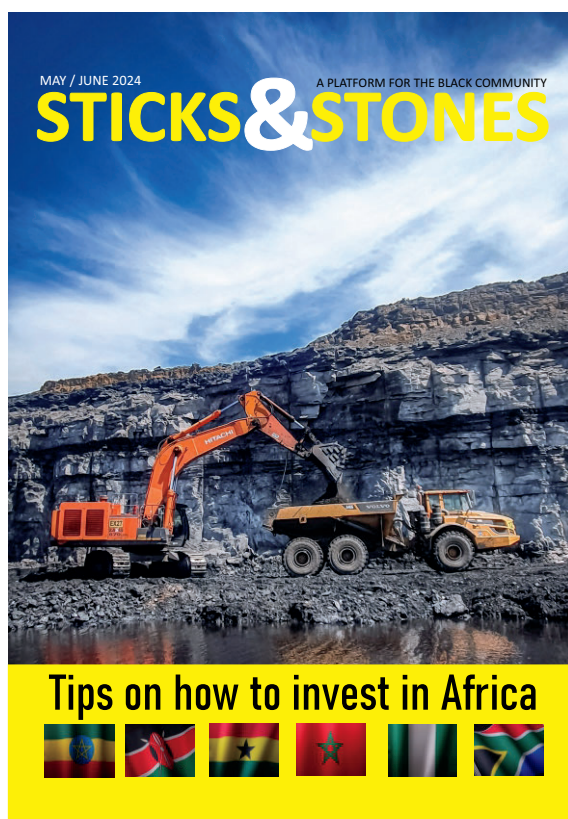
COVER STORY

As we prepare to shut down 2024, we reflect on a few of the key stories that we covered in some of our editions

2024 in retrospect

The importance of representation

Seeing successful Black entrepreneurs can inspire and motivate aspiring entrepreneurs and challenge the stereotypes and biases that exist in our society. It is crucial for Black entrepreneurs to be visible and actively share their stories and experiences. By doing so, they can help break down barriers and inspire the next generation of Black entrepreneurs to pursue their dreams and overcome the cultural obstacles they may face. This can be particularly challenging when the national narrative presents a monolithic representation of Blackness in the UK, and many of the diverse groups mentioned in this piece do not see themselves in the dominant cultural narratives around business or Blackness.



FDI into Africa from Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) hits new heights

Greenfield foreign direct investment (FDI) announcements by Middle Eastern investors in Africa have boomed in recent years, due to ambitious plans to produce renewable energy like green hydrogen and develop infrastructure such as ports, warehouses and data centres.

Companies based in Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries — namely the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain and Oman — announced 73 FDI projects in Africa worth more than \$53bn last year, according to the latest data from fDi Markets. The only year GCC investors announced more FDI capital expenditure into the continent was 2022, when they pledged \$60bn across 83 projects. More than 90% of this FDI came from the UAE and Saudi Arabia, most notably into hydrogen and other renewable energy projects. This massive uptick reflects a push by oil-rich Gulf states to diversify away from hydrocarbons and back emerging technologies. Green hydrogen will be vital for decarbonising hard-to-abate sectors such as shipping and steel, but remains years away from full implementation.

In our May / June edition we focussed on investment opportunities in Africa. The rate of return on foreign investment is higher in Africa than in any other developing region, and the continent is fast developing its commercial future. In the 21st century, the rate of real GDP has risen at more than twice its pace in the 1980s and 1990s, as industries such as construction, telecommunications, banking, and retail have all grown significantly.

COVER STORY



Labour ditches 'levelling up' title

The words "levelling up" have been "firmly Tippexed out" of the government department responsible for housing and communities, Labour has said. The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) was given that name by Boris Johnson in 2021 as the then-prime minister sought to highlight his commitment to the "levelling up" agenda. But with a change of government has come another change of name, with the department reverting to its identity as the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). Angela Rayner, the Deputy Prime Minister and the Secretary of State in charge of the department, said: "A Government of public service means fixing the fundamentals to deliver for the British people. "No more gimmicks and slogans, but the hard yards of governing in the national interest."



In today's world, stories are powerful tools that shape how we understand our past, present, and future. For too long, the history of Black communities has been told through lenses that often misrepresent, oversimplify, or entirely overlook the rich and diverse experiences of those who lived it. But 2024 was to be a transformative year with Black History Month UK unveiling its compelling theme: Reclaiming Narratives.

UK rocked by riots

The fatal stabbing of three young girls at a dance class in the seaside town of Southport, in the north of England, was followed by the worst unrest the UK has seen in more than a decade. The violence, in towns and cities across England and in Northern Ireland, has been fuelled by misinformation online, the far-right and anti-immigration sentiment. Communities responded with a series of rallies against the riots, with thousands gathering in many parts of the country. On 29 July, three young girls were killed in a knife attack at a Taylor Swift-themed dance and yoga event. Eight more children and two adults were injured. Later that day, police said they had arrested a 17-year-old from a village nearby and that they were not treating the incident as terror-related.

2024 has been an eventful year

As we draw the curtains to another eventful year, there is not doubt 2024 has given us so much to think about. It can be argued that most of what happens to us as humans is somehow connected to politicians - even though I personally believe that there is more important things in life than Downing Street or the White House. However, it's very difficult to ignore what's happening around us.

The war in Ukraine continues to rage on. On February 24 2022, Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine from Belarus to the north, the Russian-annexed Crimea Peninsula to the south, and its own territory to the east. The war has since killed thousands, displaced millions and destroyed entire cities. The United States and its allies remain committed to the restoration of Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty. It does not recognize Russia's claims to Crimea or the other regions unlawfully annexed by Russia. Western powers and their partners have taken many steps to increase aid to Ukraine and punish Russia for its 2022 offensive. Meanwhile, the international sanctions on Russia have vastly expanded, covering much of its financial, energy, defense, and tech sectors and targeting the assets of wealthy oligarchs and other individuals. The impact of this crisis has been felt throughout the entire world due to the fluctuating oil prices.

In the Middle-East an armed conflict between Israel and Hamas-led Palestinian militant groups has been taking place in the Gaza Strip and Israel since 7 October 2023. It is the fifth war of the Gaza-Israel conflict since 2008, and the most significant military engagement in the region since the Yom Kippur War in 1973. The return of Donald Trump as president of the US could be significant to both these conflicts.

The world should not forget that there is war and conflict in other parts of the globe - as the media continues to shine their spotlight on Ukraine and Gaza. Thousands of people are losing their lives in the DRC, Sudan, South Sudan and Yemen. In Haiti over 700,000 people, more than half of whom are children, are now internally displaced, according to a new report by the International Organization for Migration (IOM). These latest figures show a 22 per cent increase in the number of internally displaced people since June, highlighting the worsening humanitarian situation. Gang violence has so far forced more than 110,000 people to flee their homes in the last 7 months.

Rapid technological advancement in the 21st century is also taking centre stage. With over 100 million users, the new Artificial Intelligence tool ChatGPT (Generative Pre-trained Transformer) has gained significant popularity among students, teachers and researchers since its' release in November 2022. ChatGPT is a chatbot that uses Natural Language Processing to provide human-like answers to users' queries and engage in natural-sounding conversations. ChatGPT is programmed to carry out complex tasks, such as writing articles, poems, essays and even original computer codes, as well as translating, summarizing or expanding texts. And who would have known that come the end of the year, UK parliamentarians would be voting in favour of proposals to legalise assisted dying in England and Wales.

Political events dominated 2024, but what can we expect in the new year?



photos // [unsplash](#)

AFRICA

27 DESTINATIONS across Africa, including Lagos and Accra, via Paris from Birmingham, Edinburgh, London, Manchester and Newcastle.*



*Information is subject to change.

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AIRFRANCE

ELEGANCE IS A JOURNEY

Hartlepool-based organisation offers unique counselling services

Therapeutic and Diversity Therapy Teesside (TDTT) are a registered community interest company providing low cost and confidential counselling to adults and young people in Teesside location.

Advocacy Roles

The advocacy team plays a vital role in supporting both children and adults by ensuring their voices are heard and their rights are upheld. Advocates provide guidance, resources, and support to help individuals navigate systems, access services, and overcome barriers.

Workshops for Education sector

Workshops for children that incorporate counselling and focus on diversity and inclusion aim to create a supportive and understanding environment where young people can learn about themselves and others.

Workshop for Professionals

Workshop for professional staff by providing tools and strategies for mental health and well-being. These workshops typically cover topics such as mental health awareness, coping strategies, effective communication and conflict resolution



no one left behind

What do they offer?

Emotional Support

Emotional support involves empathy, understanding, reassurance, and encouragement during tough times. It includes being an empathetic listener and validating feelings, which are essential for mental well-being.

Financial Support

This support provides monetary assistance to ease financial burdens, either directly through aid or indirectly by offering budgeting guidance, helping create a stable environment.

Physical Support

Physical support provides hands-on help with daily activities and mobility, essential for those with physical limitations or recovering from illness, promoting independence and quality of life.

Social Support

Social support fosters belonging and companionship through quality time and reliable connections. Strong social networks are vital for mental health and community ties.

Practical Support

Practical support offers tangible help with everyday tasks, like paperwork, transportation, and home repairs, easing daily burdens and allowing individuals to focus on their well-being.

Informational Support

This involves sharing knowledge, providing advice, and helping individuals make informed decisions, empowering them to navigate life's challenges effectively.

Contact

07831849014
counselling@tdiversitytt.co.uk

Address

Business Incubation, Bovis House, Victoria Road, Hartlepool, Cleveland, England, TS24 7SE

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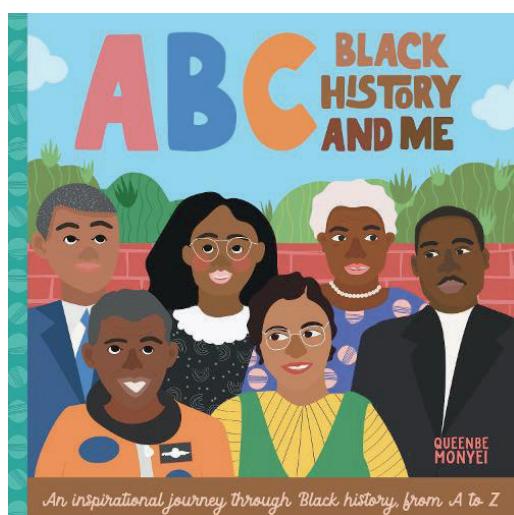


AIRFRANCEKLM
GROUP

Sheet: 9

BOOK REVIEWS

books available from **waterstones**



ABC Black History and Me Volume 14: An inspirational journey through Black history, from A to Z

Queenbe Monyei

ABC Black History and Me presents 26 historical concepts, events, and people—from A to Z—that are important in Black American history. From A is for Advocate to Z is for Zest, each letter of the alphabet is paired with inspirational historical concepts in this 9×9-inch board book. Along with the upbeat, rhyming text covering both well-known and more obscure topics, are colorful illustrations that promote an excitement and curiosity about Black American history. Covering trailblazers from A to Z but also chronologically, this book features a visual timeline with additional information for more in-depth learning on the people, places, and events discussed.

From Harriet Tubman and Fanny Jackson Coppin to Amanda Gorman and Ketanji Brown Jackson, ABC Black History and Me covers more than 170 years in a short board book appropriate for the little ones. This book is not only perfect for getting toddlers comfortable with their ABCs, but also for reflecting on how we are all affected by this history and how even the youngest of children will affect the future.

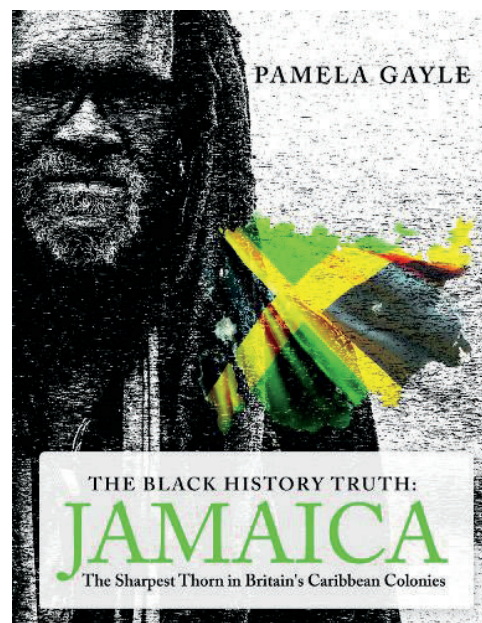
With age-appropriate concepts and visuals, ABC Black History and Me is a perfect discussion starter for the whole family. Even adults will find something to learn in this board book! The ABC for Me series presents a world of possibilities from A to Z and everything in between! For all little kids with big dreams, the endearing illustrations and mindful concepts in this series pair each letter of the alphabet with words that promote big dreams, inclusion, acceptance, healthy living, and other key concepts important to emotional well-being. Other books in this series include:

The Black History Truth - Jamaica: The Sharpest Thorn in Britain's Caribbean Colonies - The Black History Truth

Pamela Gayle

It is time to learn the stories of some nations in a more equitable way - not from the point of view of the conquerors but of the oppressed. This is why books like The Black History Truth: Jamaica by Pamela Gayle arouse great interest in a conscious reader. This book tells the story of 'The Sharpest Thorn in Britain's Caribbean Colonies,' focusing on the 16th to 19th centuries. Through extensive use of sources and images, Gayle sheds light on the injustices perpetrated by the British and analyses the stigmatization of Eurocentric historiography, which portrayed unfavorably behaviors and customs of groups of people it could not understand.

Although the subject is complex, this book is clear and precise. Gayle tackles so many topics that she arouses the admiration of readers with her profound knowledge of Jamaica. She is very direct when she blames the British, but the evidence she brings is overwhelming. In The Black History Truth: Jamaica, you will not only find descriptions of struggles and injustices but also valuable information on local heroes and heroines, such as Nana Yaa Asantewaa and Queen Nanny, as well as customs that Europeans have misunderstood. After reading this book, readers will understand why Jamaica was actually (as the subtitle describes it) "the sharpest thorn in Britain's Caribbean Colonies." I recommend this book to all those who want to see the history of humanity from a new perspective.



Powerful "Imina" captures hearts at UGU International Film Festival

A.M Visual Productions' film "Imina" garnered a standing ovation at the 12th annual UGU International Film Festival. The screening, held on October 18th, 2024, resonated deeply with the audience, leaving a lasting impression.

"Imina," written and directed by Michelle Augustine, tells the powerful story of a young woman in rural KwaZulu-Natal who fights for her education against tremendous odds. The film explores themes of resilience, hope, and the clash between tradition and personal aspirations, sparking emotional connection with viewers.

Augustine, who traveled from the United Kingdom for the screening, expressed his elation at the film's reception. "The response from the audience was incredible," he said. "The story's authenticity is what truly resonates – it reflects the struggles faced by many in these communities." Margate, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa – A.M Visual Productions' film "Imina" garnered a standing ovation at the 12th annual UGU International Film Festival. The screening, held on October 18th, 2024, resonated deeply with the audience, leaving a lasting impression. "Imina," written and directed by Michelle Augustine, tells the powerful story of a young woman in rural KwaZulu-Natal who fights for her education against tremendous odds. The film explores themes of resilience, hope, and the clash between tradition and personal aspirations, sparking emotional connection with viewers.

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The UGU Film Festival offers more than just screenings. This year, it provided workshops and discussions led by industry experts, fostering growth and knowledge exchange for aspiring filmmakers.

"These festivals are crucial for developing our local film industry," said Augustine. "They provide educational opportunities through workshops, and they create a space for filmmakers to collaborate and share experiences. I'm incredibly grateful to the UGU organizers and the Margate community for embracing 'Imina.'"

The festival served as a melting pot for filmmakers, actors, producers, and other industry professionals, fostering collaboration and connection. "Imina's" success signifies the exceptional quality of local productions and the potential of South African stories to captivate audiences worldwide.



Michelle Augustine nominated for award

AFRICAN HUMANITARIAN AWARDS

NOMINEE
Michelle Augustine (NIGERIA)

CATEGORY
Youth Empowerment

NGO
Visual Productions Foundation

PROFILE
He is a renowned film director and producer, acclaimed for his exceptional ability to craft thought-provoking stories addressing global concerns. As a visionary storyteller and dedicated humanitarian, he empowers young talents from disadvantaged communities, providing a platform for them to refine their skills and flourish. His innovative initiatives equip young talents with digital media and cinematography expertise, creating opportunities for career advancement in the film industry. With an unwavering commitment, he inspires positive change through storytelling, leaving a lasting imprint on the film industry.

Date: **January 28, 2025**

<https://africanhumanitarianawards.com> **AFRICAN HUMANITARIAN AWARDS 2025 BY ELGEE INFO**

The renowned was recently nominated at the African Humanitarian Awards as a digital creative and filmmaker committed to empowering young talents across Africa and beyond. Over the years, his work has provided platforms for individuals to showcase their creative talents, in areas such as presenting, acting, scriptwriting, film production, and directing, amongst other media talents, enabling many to achieve significant media exposures, stardom, and appear on major big screens. This recognition reflects his dedication to storytelling and filmmaking as tools not only for creating opportunities, but also for amplifying voices, and inspiring positive global change.

NATIONAL NEWS

Innovate UK and BBSRC announce £2.5 million investment for 13 projects to drive the design and development of innovative food and beverage products. The early-stage feasibility projects will use the funding to assess and test new ideas, determining their viability before committing to larger-scale projects. These projects have the potential to enhance the nutritional quality of food and beverage products consumed by the UK population, ultimately supporting health and wellbeing at any point across the life course. Unhealthy diets are a key driver of global health issues, including obesity and malnutrition. In the UK, most people fall short of dietary guidelines for key nutrients and food groups, like fruits, vegetables, and fibre, which are all part of a healthy lifestyle.

Simultaneously, our food systems are challenging the health of the planet and causing environmental damage. As the global population grows, the pressure to produce enough nutritious food will only intensify, while the UK faces the added challenge of producing and promoting the uptake of healthier, more nutritious food products.

Driving innovative solutions to improve health and nutrition



**UK Research
and Innovation**

AfBC to host the UK - Africa Diaspora Business Forum in London



African Business Chamber (AfBC) will host the UK - Africa Diaspora Business Forum 2025 in London on Saturday, 25 April 2025.

The Forum will bring together African diaspora business leaders, Government officials, investors, entrepreneurs, diasporas, experts, policymakers, academia and professionals from across the UK to deliberate and showcase economic growth opportunities in the UK and Africa for both local, regional and international businesses and investors. In an increasingly interconnected world, the influence of diaspora communities on the global economy has become more apparent. Among these, the African diaspora in the UK holds a unique position, bridging two continents that are teeming with untapped economic potential. With a population of 1.5 to 2 million, Africans in the UK are making significant contributions to both the British economy and the development of African nations through remittances, investment, and entrepreneurship. However, despite their contributions, the economic impact of the African diaspora remains underappreciated and underserved. Addressing these gaps could unlock vast opportunities for economic growth, not just for Africa but for the UK as well.



The African Business Chamber (AfBC) stands at the forefront of promoting this potential, representing and supporting African businesses, entrepreneurs, and investors in thriving within the global economy. By enhancing trade and investment relationships, AfBC is dedicated to fostering economic resilience and participation.

COMMUNITY NEWS



We launched our first Phoenix Way programme in Sunderland in September 2024. Since then, our ops team have been working with 11 fantastic local organisations to design and deliver a new model of participatory grantmaking that we hope will become a new model for resourcing community leaders and initiatives led for and by us.

Working this way has enabled us to connect meaningfully with community leaders, developing relationships that have allowed us to understand their unique journeys and what is driving them to want to create social benefit for Sunderland. We have held a number of design sessions and through this time together we have built a collective, collaborative culture that has steered the project forward.

Our collective vision for our new fund is: "To strengthen community organisations in Sunderland by meeting them where they are in their development, whether they're just starting, establishing stability, or seeking to grow their impact. By boosting their core capacity, the fund helps organisations build a stable foundation, deepen their impact, connections, and improve long-term sustainability so they can serve their communities with confidence and resilience."

We are now in the final stages of finalising how we will administer the fund and expect to open it up for expression of interest in the next week or so with a view to rapidly releasing funds in the new year. The opening up of our first grant programme marks a huge milestone for The Phoenix Way North East & Cumbria as we endeavour to embed our work within communities and ensure it is meeting their needs effectively. We are hopeful that we can build upon this template of participatory working and launch similar initiatives across our region in 2025. If you're reading this in Sunderland please look out for an imminent update and for everyone else we'll be sharing a full report of what we've learned through delivering this project in the new year.

Bayo Obasaju, Programme Manager



The Phoenix Way to launch new fund for local organisations

Funding Opportunity: The Baobab Community

Baobab is a Black-led, community resourcer, mobiliser and organiser for Black and Global Majority individuals and groups dismantling racial injustice in the UK. They have recently announced the return of The Baobab Community Fund!

A £3m fund dedicated to Black African/Caribbean and Global Majority collectives, organisations and individuals dismantling systems of oppression for our communities in their work.

What is the fund amount?

The Baobab Community Fund is offering grants ranging from £5,000 - £30,000 per year for up to 5 years.

When is the deadline?

The deadline for applications is Monday, 3rd Feb 2025 at 11:59PM (GMT).



Baobab Foundation was created out of the Black struggle and resilience in the UK, which was catalysed in 2020 by a series of traumatic events, including the murder of George Floyd. Collectively we have mobilised resources from UK trusts, foundations and private businesses to challenge and heal our ongoing experiences of underfunding, marginalisation and anti-blackness. We want to celebrate our power, creativity, value, energy and joy.

Members of Parliament have backed proposals to legalise assisted dying in England and Wales in a historic vote which paves the way for a change in the law.

Under draft legislation being considered by Parliament, terminally ill adults expected to die within six months could seek help to end their own life. In the first Commons vote on the issue in nearly a decade, MPs supported the bill by 330 to 275, a majority of 55.

The bill will now face many more months of debate and scrutiny by MPs and peers, who could choose to amend it, with the approval of both Houses of Parliament required before it becomes law. MPs were given a free vote, meaning they could make a decision based on their own conscience rather than having to follow a party line.

Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer and his Conservative predecessor Rishi Sunak voted in favour, while Tory leader Kemi Badenoch voted against. The government has taken a neutral stance on the bill and at the end of the debate Justice Minister Alex Davies-Jones confirmed if Parliament backed a change to the law the government would "ensure that any bill is effective and that its provisions can be enforced". Labour MP Kim Leadbeater, who put forward the bill, told the BBC she was "a bit overwhelmed" following the vote and it meant "a huge amount" to be able to tell campaigners the bill had passed its first parliamentary hurdle.

To be eligible for assisted dying under the bill, someone must have the mental capacity to make a choice about ending their life and express a "clear, settled and informed" wish, free from coercion or pressure, at every stage of the process. Two independent doctors and a High Court judge must be satisfied someone is eligible and has made their decision voluntarily. Current laws across the UK prevent people from asking for medical help to die. A separate bill to legalise assisted dying in Scotland, external has been proposed by a Liberal Democrat member of the Scottish Parliament and is expected to be voted on by MSPs next year.



There is some debate over exactly what the various terms mean, external. However, **assisted dying** generally refers to a person who is terminally ill receiving lethal drugs from a medical practitioner, which they administer themselves.

Assisted suicide is intentionally helping another person to end their life, including someone who is not terminally ill. That could involve providing lethal medication or helping them travel to another jurisdiction to die.

Euthanasia is the act of deliberately ending a person's life to relieve suffering in which a lethal drug is administered by a physician. Patients may not be terminally ill. There are two types: voluntary euthanasia, where a patient consents; and non-voluntary, where they cannot because, for example, they are in a coma.

MPs vote in favour of historic bill to allow assisted dying

Where is euthanasia or assisted dying legal around the world?

The Dignity in Dying campaign group says more than 200 million people around the world have legal access to assisted dying, external.

Switzerland has allowed assisted suicide since 1942. Its Dignitas facility - which accepts foreign patients as well as Swiss nationals. Between 1998 and 2023 it helped 571 Britons to die, external. Assisted suicide is also legal in Austria.

In the US, 11 states - Oregon, California, New Mexico, Colorado, Washington, Hawaii, New Jersey, Vermont, Maine and Washington DC - allow "physician-assisted dying". It permits doctors to prescribe lethal drugs for self-administration.

Voluntary euthanasia is legal in Canada where it is called medical assistance in dying. It can be provided by a doctor or nurse practitioner, either in person or through the prescription of drugs for self-administration.

It is also legal in Spain and Colombia, both of which also permit assisted suicide. Assisted dying is legal in some parts of Australia but the law differs across states.

New Zealand's End of Life Choice Act legalises assisted dying and allows adults in their final months of life to request assistance from a medical professional. Three countries have laws that allow people who are not terminally ill to receive assistance to die: The Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg.

Fire service enters partnership to help break down race barriers

A North East fire service has partnered with a social enterprise to help break down race barriers. County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service (CDDFRS) have recently begun working with pioneering Teakisi. CDDFRS and Teakisi are on a joint mission to help attract candidates from minoritised communities to apply for the Service's current firefighter apprenticeship programme and help build on the Service's inclusive workforce policies.

Chief Fire Officer, Steve Helps said: "As a Service, we really value diversity. "A diverse team brings with it diversity of thought - people with different backgrounds, cultures and lived-in experiences will offer a fresh perspective, helping foster creativity and innovation."

He added: "Already, our work with Teakisi has helped open our eyes to the fact many people from minoritised backgrounds don't feel connected or engaged with the fire service, therefore, miss out on the opportunity of the career of a lifetime, being a firefighter.

"We truly do strive to become a Service that reflects all members of its community, and that's why we've sought the expert guidance of Teakisi. "This partnership is about more than just assisting us recruit a more diverse next generation of firefighters, it's about helping us become the best Service we can be and ensuring we can serve everyone in our communities."

Salha Kaitesi is the founder of Teakisi, welcomed the initiative. Looking forward to working with the Service, she said: "Teakisi is pleased to join forces with County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service in supporting greater diversity and representation within the fire service. "Our mission is to help bridge the gap, ensuring that opportunities are open and welcoming to all, particularly for candidates from minoritised communities. "Together, we're not only focused on recruitment but on building a workplace that genuinely reflects and serves the whole community, inspiring a new generation of firefighters who bring diverse perspectives and lived experiences to this vital role."



Challenging gatekeeping for inclusive growth

At Teakisi, we believe in fostering safe, inclusive spaces where all community members can thrive. Safeguarding isn't just about protecting individuals from harm; it's about ensuring equitable access to resources, opportunities, and decision-making platforms. However, a pervasive barrier often undermines these efforts: the gatekeeper mentality.

Gatekeeping manifests in various ways, from controlling access to resources to determining who is "worthy" of representation. For already marginalised groups – such as migrant workers, refugees, people seeking asylum, and individuals from minoritised communities – this behaviour can mean exclusion from essential services and opportunities, further entrenching systemic inequalities.

Migrant workers, refugees, people seeking asylum and others from marginalised backgrounds face significant challenges, including discrimination, lack of diversity, and inadequate cultural awareness in services meant to support them. These barriers exacerbate their struggles in accessing housing, healthcare, education, employment, and legal services. At its heart, safeguarding requires dismantling these barriers to create environments where everyone feels safe, valued, and empowered. But the gatekeeper mentality poses a unique challenge by limiting collective action. When individuals or organisations restrict information, resources, or opportunities, they weaken the community's collective strength and hinder efforts to create equitable systems.

We've been listening to community members share their experiences of being excluded or exploited by gatekeeping practices. These stories highlight how critical it is to safeguard vulnerable groups by amplifying their voices, ensuring inclusive access to resources, and addressing systemic inequalities. Addressing gatekeeping requires a collective effort as sometimes those we put our trust in are the very ones with the gatekeeping mentality. When that is the case, what can you do? Teakisi is committed to challenging this harmful mentality through workshops, storytelling, and advocacy. But safeguarding is a shared responsibility, and we must all work together to dismantle barriers that perpetuate exclusion. Whether you're an individual or part of an organisation, you have a role in creating systems that prioritise inclusion and equity.

Contact us today to report concerns or to get involved in our mission. We are reachable at info@teakisi.com or by phone 03301335027.

credit // **salhakaitesi**

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

My journey into fashion design began with a deep-rooted love for fashion and creativity. As a child, I was captivated by fashion shows on television and intrigued by how people used clothing to express themselves. I've always admired impeccable dress sense, which further fueled my passion for the art of design. This passion grew stronger as I got older. I vividly recall visiting a seamstress with my mom to have clothes made for special occasions. I would sketch out my own designs and describe them in detail to the tailor. While some of the dresses met my expectations, others often fell short, leaving me dissatisfied. These experiences sparked a realization: I wanted to take control of the creative process and bring my visions to life.

This desire to create unique, expressive designs that evoke a "wow" factor inspired me to pursue a career in fashion design. Today, I channel that passion into crafting pieces that not only reflect individuality but also leave lasting impressions. Living in Teesside has greatly expanded my creativity for Dazzle Me Couture. Coming from Africa, where the climate is predominantly hot year-round, adjusting to Teesside's distinct seasons has challenged me to design clothing that caters to all weather conditions—winter, summer, autumn, and beyond. Teesside's art-loving community, with its strong appreciation for aesthetics, has also been a significant source of inspiration. The emphasis on innovation and creativity aligns perfectly with Dazzle Me Couture's vision, encouraging me to explore sustainable practices and incorporate them into our brand. This vibrant environment continues to inspire designs that are not only versatile and stylish but also thoughtful and forward-thinking.

My designs are deeply influenced by both cultural and personal experiences. Growing up in Nigeria, I was surrounded by vibrant colors, intricate patterns, and rich textiles that have left a lasting imprint on my creative vision. Traditional African fashion, with its bold expressions of identity and heritage, continues to inspire my work, especially in the use of unique prints and statement pieces.

On a personal level, my journey as a designer has been shaped by my love for individuality and storytelling. Every piece and collection I create is a reflection of a story, whether it's inspired by cultural celebrations, personal milestones, or even everyday life. Living in Teesside has further broadened my perspective, exposing me to diverse styles and traditions that I incorporate into my designs.

Ultimately, Dazzle Me's goal is to blend these cultural and personal influences to create timeless, meaningful pieces that resonate with people across different walks of life.

My design aesthetics can be described as a fusion of elegance, cultural vibrancy, and contemporary flair. At Dazzle Me Couture, I focus on creating timeless pieces that celebrate individuality through bold patterns, intricate detailing, and versatile silhouettes.

photos // **damilolaayemi**



Damilola Ayemi



My designs blend traditional influences, particularly from African heritage, with modern elements to produce outfits that are both striking and functional

My designs blend traditional influences, particularly from African heritage, with modern elements to produce outfits that are both striking and functional. The goal is always to evoke confidence and a sense of uniqueness in the wearer, whether through statement pieces or everyday fashion. Sustainability and craftsmanship are also integral to my aesthetic, ensuring that each design not only stands out but is thoughtfully created.

I enjoy working with rich fabrics like silk, cotton, African prints, and wool, as they offer versatility and cultural depth. Techniques such as hand-embroidery, beading, and fabric manipulation allow me to add unique details and create innovative silhouettes. Sustainability is also important, so I often use eco-friendly fabrics and upcycling methods to ensure my designs are both stylish and environmentally conscious.

As a Black designer, I navigate the fashion industry's representation and diversity challenges by staying true to my identity and using my work to celebrate African culture and Black heritage. I focus on creating designs that highlight underrepresented communities and ensure inclusivity by collaborating with diverse models, stylists, and creatives. By offering a platform for various perspectives, I aim to contribute to a more inclusive fashion landscape. Despite ongoing challenges, I believe that authenticity, advocacy for diversity, and showcasing diverse experiences will help drive change in the industry.

Through my designs, I hope to tell a story of cultural pride, individuality, and timeless beauty. I want my creations to celebrate the richness of African heritage, blending traditional elements with contemporary style. Each piece is meant to evoke emotion, whether it's a sense of empowerment, confidence, or connection to one's roots.

I also aim to convey that fashion is more than just clothing—it's a form of self-expression and storytelling. By incorporating intricate details, vibrant patterns, and sustainable practices, I want to show that fashion can be both beautiful and meaningful. Ultimately, the message I hope to convey is one of embracing your uniqueness, honoring your heritage, and confidently showcasing it to the world.

Looking ahead to 2025, Dazzle Me Couture is poised for exciting growth and new opportunities. I plan to expand the brand's reach, both locally and internationally, by showcasing collections at more prestigious fashion events and exploring collaborations with other creatives. The focus will remain on creating high-quality, culturally inspired designs that resonate with a global audience, while also maintaining a commitment to sustainability and ethical practices. Additionally, I'm excited to introduce new collections that continue to blend African heritage with contemporary styles, offering fresh takes on traditional designs. As the fashion industry becomes more inclusive, Dazzle Me Couture will continue to play an active role in promoting diversity and representation in the fashion world. 2025 will be a year of increased visibility, innovation, and expansion, with the aim of solidifying Dazzle Me Couture as a globally recognized brand that celebrates culture, creativity, and individuality.

LOCAL NEWS

As we look back on 2024, Ubuntu Multicultural Centre CIC takes immense pride in the accomplishments and milestones achieved throughout the year. We kicked off the year by resuming our music training program for children and young people aged 5 to 19, reaching over 40 participants. This program introduced them to various instruments like the bass guitar, keyboard, drums, and engaged them in singing and songwriting. Additionally, our "Sit and Chat" project provided a platform for social interaction and support, serving around 400 individuals and fostering a sense of community and belonging. Our commitment to supporting the elderly was evident in the continuation of the Super Adults program, which hosted monthly meetings for individuals aged 65 and above. With sessions delivered by subject experts, this initiative helped combat isolation, promote socialization, and encourage healthy living. Approximately 40 adults benefited from these meetings, which included activities like home-cooked meals, sporting events, and participation in community activities.

In collaboration with Turn2Us, we supported 24 families with children, providing financial aid of £2,500 per family to help tackle the cost of living. Our Data Bank Project, in partnership with the Good Things Foundation, offered free SIM cards with data to 20 families, helping to bridge the digital divide and ensure everyone can stay connected.

We also launched the Healthy Hearts Project in late September, offering free health checks such as blood pressure measurements, ECGs, and weight assessments. In partnership with the Hope Foundation, this initiative supported 100 service users, promoting heart health and well-being.

In November 2024, we collaborated with the Junction Foundation to launch the "Multibank" initiative. This project aimed to provide essentials like household items, clothes, sanitary products, and toiletries to families who cannot afford them. Through this initiative, we supported 35 families this year, and we plan to continue this support in 2025.

Additionally, the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme was a significant highlight. Delivered during the Easter holidays (4 days) and Summer Holidays (16 days), it spanned four hours per day. Over the year, we have conducted 80 sessions, benefiting 3,200 participants aged 5 to 19 years who are on receipt of free school meals, divided into primary and secondary groups. These activities were hosted at two venues: Newport Community Hub and The Resource Centre on Meath Street. Participants enjoyed hot meals and engaged in various activities, including arts and crafts, football, dodgeball, cooking sessions, storytelling, and outdoor trips. For this project, we recruited 50 seasonal staff members.

We also launched Knife Crime Education Workshops in collaboration with Africa Connect Network CIC to educate young people about the consequences of carrying knives and how to de-escalate conflicts. So far, we have delivered two workshops, educating 20 young people, with two more workshops scheduled for January and February 2025.



Ubuntu Multicultural Centre CIC: Reflecting on 2024 and Vision for 2025

Our Ecoshop Project, in collaboration with FareShare, has been another cornerstone of our community support efforts. Through this project, we have been able to offer food parcels to 40 families per week, containing 10 essential items for just £2. This initiative has provided crucial support to families struggling with food insecurity. Our main services are advice, information, and support. We offered these services to over 1,200 service users, providing one-to-one support based on appointments.

Our achievements this year would not have been possible without the incredible support from our funders: National Lottery, Virgin Media Foundation, Middlesbrough Council, Independence Age, Youth Music, and the numerous generous donors who came forward to support our work. Every small contribution made a significant impact, reaching and benefiting our community.

Looking ahead to 2025, our vision is to expand existing programs and introduce new initiatives to further enrich and support the community. We plan to launch a digital skills workshop aimed at those with little to no knowledge about computers, laptops, and smartphones, empowering individuals with essential tech skills. By increasing outreach and support services, we aim to provide more comprehensive community engagement programs and continue offering a welcoming space for the elderly to socialize and participate in community events.

In summary, 2024 was a year of significant achievements for Ubuntu Multicultural Centre CIC. We successfully met our goals, engaging numerous community members through various programs and initiatives. Our vision for 2025 focuses on further expanding our reach, enhancing our support services, and continuing to foster a sense of community and well-being among our members.

Contact Information

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LOCAL NEWS



As the UK celebrated Black History Month throughout October, Foundation of Light have taken the opportunity to celebrate black accomplishments and promote anti-discrimination messaging throughout our programmes.

Working with participants from primary school through Premier League Primary Stars to Over 55s through Wear Together, Sunderland AFC's official charity has an unprecedented reach within the city and across South Tyneside and County Durham.

The Foundation uses this opportunity to reach as many people as possible across all walks of life to spread the word on black achievement and the importance of stamping out racism.

Primary Intervention Programme

Students from PIP, a six-week intervention for children at risk of exclusion or falling behind in their education, took part in several Black History Month projects. The pupils learned about pioneers such as Frida Kahlo and the charity work of England footballer Marcus Rashford. The group have also taken part in a Foundation of Light Equality Workshop and made posters to promote allyship on the back of their learning.

Coals to Goals

Attendees of the Coals to Goals Heritage Group, our informal group discussion sessions aimed at former shipyard and colliery workers to share stories and reconnect socially, took part in a Black History of Sunderland heritage walk. The group visited locations across the city, paying homage to various Black History figures such as James Field Stanfield and Celestine Edwards.

Premier League Kicks

One of the Foundation's Premier League Kicks groups were tasked with thinking of new ideas to highlight Black History. The participants worked on football-style trading cards featuring inspirational black people from the world of football and local Black History figures to Sunderland and the North East. The cards featured information on the work of each figure, highlighting their contribution and spreading the word of their work.

Foundation of Light Scholars

An upcoming Foundation of Light football scholarship side played a Black History Month commemorative friendly match against Windrush African Caribbean North-East U16s. The Windrush African Caribbean side brings together local teenagers, many of them descendants of the Windrush Generation, to honour the contribution of those who answered the British government's call after World War 2. Former Sunderland AFC captain and friend of the Foundation of Light, Gary Bennett, was in attendance at Ford Football Hub and took the honorary kick-off to get the match underway. Bennett, whose parents travelled to the UK from Jamaica as part of the Windrush generation, supported the launch of the Windrush Football Club earlier this year.

Foundation of Light honours Black History Month 2024



credit // [foundationoflight](#)

NATIONAL NEWS

The truth about asylum

Looking for the facts about asylum? The same old myths and scare stories about refugees and people seeking asylum are peddled again and again. You can rely on the facts and figures below to get the true picture—and help spread the truth about asylum.

People seeking asylum and refugees—who's who?

Refugee

The definition of a refugee according to the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees is:

"A person who owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it."

In the UK, a person becomes a refugee when government agrees that an individual who has applied for asylum meets the definition in the Refugee Convention they will "recognise" that person as a refugee and issue them with refugee status documentation. Usually refugees in the UK are given five years leave to remain as a refugee. They must then apply for further leave, although their status as a refugee is not limited to five years.

Person seeking asylum

A person who has left their country of origin and formally applied for asylum in another country but whose application has not yet been concluded. Wherever possible, we prefer to describe someone as a person seeking asylum as we feel that the term "asylum seeker" is dehumanising.

Migrant

Someone who has moved to another country for other reasons, such as to find work.

Refused asylum applicant

A person whose asylum application has been unsuccessful and who has no other claim for protection awaiting a decision. Some people who have their case refused voluntarily return home, others are forcibly returned. For some, it is not safe or

41%

of displaced people across the world are children



Addressing misconceptions about people seeking asylum

People seeking asylum are looking for a place of safety

The top ten refugee producing countries in 2021 all have poor human rights records or on-going conflict. People seeking asylum are fleeing from these conflicts and abuses, looking for safety.

In 2021, more than two-thirds of the refugees across the world came from just five countries: Syria (6.8 million), Venezuela (4.6 million), Afghanistan (2.7 million), South Sudan (2.4 million) and Myanmar (1.2 million).

There is no such thing as an "illegal" or "bogus" person seeking asylum. Under international law, anyone has the right to apply for asylum in any country that has signed the 1951 Convention and to remain there until the authorities have assessed their claim.

It is recognised in the 1951 Convention that people fleeing persecution may have to use irregular means in order to escape and claim asylum in another country – there is no legal way to travel to the UK for the specific purpose of seeking asylum.

The 1951 Refugee Convention guarantees everybody the right to apply for asylum. It has saved millions of lives. No country has ever withdrawn from it.

People seeking asylum do not get large handouts from the state

People seeking asylum do not come to the UK to claim benefits. Most know nothing about welfare benefits before they arrive and had no expectation that they would receive financial support. Most people seeking asylum are living in poverty and experience poor health and hunger. Many families are not able to pay for the basics such as clothing, powdered milk and nappies. Almost all people seeking asylum are not allowed to work and are forced to rely on state support—**this is as little as £6.43 a day to live on.**



Teesside clinches leisure airport of the year for second year running

Teesside Airport has clinched the title of Best UK Airport for Leisure Travel for the second year in a row at a prestigious awards ceremony.

The airport took home the prize once again at the British Travel Awards at a glittering ceremony in London. The public vote saw Teesside come out on top for the second year running ahead of East Midlands and Liverpool Airports. More than 1.2million votes were cast across all travel and leisure categories by more than 400,000 people. The popular awards cover the whole holiday sector, with travel companies, cruise lines, travel agents, hotel brands, airlines and airports all in the race for honours.

A new Ryanair holiday route unveiled to Malaga, the return of Dalaman flights with TUI, and the best summer passenger numbers for 15 years have marked another fine 12 months for Teesside. Tees Valley Mayor Ben Houchen said: "I'm delighted just how much impact our airport is making both here in Teesside, Darlington and Hartlepool and further afield. The industry is really standing up and taking notice of the huge strides, we're taking here – and 2025 promises to be another amazing year with Malaga claiming its rightful place back on our departure boards.

"Winning is a habit – and it's great for all the airport's hard work to pay off." Phil Forster, Teesside International Airport Managing Director, said: "I'd once again like to say a massive thanks to all of our valued passengers who took the time to give us their backing for the second year in a row. We know people love flying from Teesside but to see it translate into this fantastic award once again is wonderful.

"We always want to give our passengers the very best whether they're taking off for holidays, business, or basing their company here. This award is a testament to all our staff and the work they do – without them we wouldn't be close to picking up silverware.

"While there may be uncertainty ahead in the wider aviation industry, we can always rely on their dedication and professionalism."

The award marks the end of another successful year at the airport – which has seen the most summer passengers through the terminal in 15 years and a return to profit for the first time since its return to public ownership. All flights for next year's summer season are now on sale, with Ryanair offering services to Faro in Portugal, Majorca and Corfu alongside a three-times weekly year-round Alicante service and the new 2025 route to Malaga.

TUI – one of the UK's biggest holiday companies – also expanded its offering from Teesside this year, with flights to Turkey's popular Dalaman destination alongside its twice-weekly flights to Majorca.

Bumper passenger numbers packed out Balkan Holidays services to Bourgas, Bulgaria, to make 2024 their best summer season yet. Plus, holidaymakers and business travellers are making the most of KLM's three-times daily service to Amsterdam Schiphol – serving more than 160 onward global destinations.

This year has also seen the airport take big strides developing its Business Park, securing FedEx flights in a landmark freight deal, and the launch this autumn of a new aircraft painting facility operated by aircraft painting firm Airbourne Colours.

IT IS CHRISTMAS

It is the season for hot chocolate, sweaters and cookies galore! It's getting closer and closer to Christmas, so the time has come to celebrate. That means snuggling in for Christmas movie marathons and brushing off all your best tree decorating ideas. But in the rush of the busy holiday season, it can also be hard to slow down and think more intentionally about how you want to celebrate. That's why we compiled this list of the best Christmas activities! You can use these ideas as a bucket list for the holiday season, or browse them for inspiration for your next Christmas party.

Find a holiday market

Shop local for the cutest presents that have a positive impact on your community, too. Christmas fairs and craft markets aren't just an adorably festive way to spend the day, they'll also support local businesses.



Do a good deed

Christmas is a good time to be thankful for your blessings and help those who are less fortunate. It can be as simple as giving a genuine compliment or more involved like a full day of volunteering at the soup kitchen. Either way, it will bring more joy into the world and make you feel good, too.

Play games by the tree

It's a lot of work to set up and decorate the tree, so make the most of it! Set up a board game or puzzle in front of your evergreen to enjoy family time with an unbeatable view.

Wear matching pyjamas

Get cozy in some adorable matching pyjama sets. Whether or not you take a family picture in them, it'll make fun Christmas memories together — and you can enjoy the pyjamas again and again.

Some few ideas to help you celebrate *the festive season*

Gift a teacher or other cherished friend

Is there somebody who does a lot for you who you don't typically buy a present for? Try getting them a heartfelt gift to show your gratitude, or even hand make them something. There's no better way to show your appreciation.



Attend a Christmas service

Even if your family doesn't usually attend church services, Christmas is a great opportunity to put on your Sunday finery and visit a nearby place of worship. It'll also help everyone remember the reason for the season.

Help us make a difference

Sticks and Stones supports **Revive Congo**, one of the many charities trying hard to help the people in Congo. Kindly visit their website to donate and check other ways you can get involved.



Revive Congo is a Non-profit organisation founded by Pamela Abiola and Lakeisha Kayoka in 2012.

The DRC youth make up more than 30% of the population; however, more than seven million children between the ages of 5 and 17 are denied access to education. This unfathomable number is due to factors such as lack of education institutes around the country, poorly trained teachers, and poverty is the most critical factor. Since parents cannot afford to send their children to school, this has a significant impact on the country as it means that the DRC children. These children are indeed the future, have no qualifications and are ill-equipped, thus denying them the chances of having a better future and breaking out of the poverty cycle.

We believe that lack of funds should not stop young people within the DRC from fulfilling their dreams. Thus, we are committed to creating opportunities for young people to learn the necessary skills and a chance to fulfil their future ambitions.

Revive Congo has been set up to ensure the advancement of education for young people in the UK and Democratic Republic of Congo. Though providing informal educational measures to develop the capability and capacities of their skill to independently and responsibly participate in society and to increase their employment prospects.

Our programmes intend to provide informal education on the history of the Democratic Republic of Congo. In addition to this, our summer youth programme provides an opportunity for young people to develop their project management skills, communication skills and financial management, as well as receive advice on careers, volunteering and academic opportunities. This programme has contributed to developing the skills and capabilities of young people to independently participate in society in the longer term.

We also promote the advancement of education for young people in the Democratic Republic of Congo through producing e-learning material to provide informal education on leadership and entrepreneurship skills. This learning resource seeks to develop the capability and capacities of their skill to independently and responsibly participate in society and to increase their employment prospects.

Our work has shown us that this approach is effective and transformational. We are seeking to ensure that our programme is accessible to children in the UK and in the DRC. Currently, we are aware of initiatives proposed which support the development of young people, however there are few services run by those of similar demographics to that of Revive Congo.

revivecongo.org

OUR PROJECTS

Summer Youth Programme

We organise annual summer Youth programmes, dedicated to all young people. Our free Programme covers various topics including: the History of Congo, the culture of Congo, project management and business, mental health awareness and career advice to help young people flourish in their community.

Charity Football Tournament

Revive Congo organises a football tournament once every year to encourage unity among young people, for our supporters to have fun and to also raise some money towards educating young people in the DRC.

Primary Education Project

Our goal is to provide access to primary education for children in the DRC by paying for school fees, as well as supporting our partner Mission Marie orphanage based in Kinshasa with developing an adequate learning environment for children living in poverty, particularly those in orphanages through providing equipment necessary to aid their learning or basic needs.



EVENTS



UK-Africa Commerce and Investment Summit 2024: Teesside hosts second annual event

Teesside once again took centre stage as the UK-Africa Commerce and Investment Summit 2024 marked its second consecutive year in the region. Held on 12th November 2024 at AV Dawson's The Staiths, the summit brought together business leaders, investors, and policymakers to explore and strengthen trade and investment ties between the UK and Africa. Organized by the Middlesbrough Masvingo Alliance in partnership with Sticks and Stones Studios and supported by RTC North and the Tees Valley Supply Chain Program, the event showcased Teesside's role as a dynamic hub for global commerce and innovation.

The summit featured an impressive lineup of speakers, including **Charlie Nettle**, AV Dawson – discussing Teesside's logistics potential and opportunities for trade, **Jim Barr**, RTC North – sharing insights into UK-African collaboration through innovation, **Neil Young**, Teesworks – highlighting industrial development and opportunities within the Tees Valley, **Hilaire Agnama** – presenting investment opportunities in Togo, **Nyasha Banhire** – exploring trade and commerce prospects in Masvingo, Zimbabwe and **Professor Love** from South Africa – delivering a compelling talk on regional partnerships and educational synergies.

The panel discussion also brought together esteemed participants including David Smith, Andrew Glover, Laurence Robertson, Olawale Bamidele and Claran McSharry, who engaged in lively debates on trade policies, business opportunities, and sustainable investment strategies. Middlesbrough Masvingo Alliance and its partners continue to champion initiatives that connect Teesside to global markets, emphasizing the region's commitment to international partnerships. Event organizers expressed gratitude to all attendees, sponsors, and speakers for their contributions to the summit's success. Plans for the 2025 edition are already underway, with aspirations to expand the summit's reach and impact.



photos // sticksandstonesstudios

EVENTS



Black Business community awards and dinner

The event was organised to honour the exceptional achievements of Black businesses and entrepreneurs in Teesside. The inaugural Black Business Community Awards showcased the talent, resilience, and innovation that have shaped our community.

Categories and winners

- The Keeper** – Bensiri Consultancy
- The Innovator** – Reuel Nature
- The Overcomer** – Marian Asyi; Susan Mansaray
- The Apprentice** – DJ Toluwase Akin-Jaiyeoba aka DJ Lizzy
- Honorary Award** – Thirteen Group; Sytner Mercedes-Benz Teesside
- The Entertainer** – Lounge Afrique; DJ Erv
- Food and Beverage** - Rootz and Kolture Restaurant; Salam Restaurant
- The Advocate** – UK Visa Advice Service
- Film and TV** – Elvis Katoto
- Music, The Legend** – The Chief; Sturge
- The Fashionista** – Mr Rocca
- Hair and Beauty** – AfroKings Barbershop; Bentley Lounge Barbershop; QueenStar Saloon
- The Traveller** – Alphapack Travelling
- Community Impact** – Women Today; Transformer HPL; Ubuntu Multicultural Centre
- Lifetime Achievement** – Desmaz Uzoma 'Bobby'; Apolaire Ouedraogo
- Tech Impact** - Olawale Bamidele



photos // sticksandstonesstudios

S&S // 27

The United Nations have called for more international attention to “the forgotten crisis” in Sudan, where more than a year and a half of war pushed the African country to the brink of famine.



The ‘forgotten crisis’ in Sudan

The appeal by Ted Chaiban, deputy head of the U.N. children’s agency UNICEF, came as the notorious paramilitary Rapid Support Forces rampaged through villages and towns in east-central Gezira province, looting and vandalizing public and private properties, according to a doctors’ union and a youth group. Dozens of people were reported killed. Chaiban said the war, which erupted in April 2023 between the military and the RSF, created “one of the most acute crises in living memory” with more than 14 million people forced to flee their homes, making Sudan the world’s largest displacement crisis.

The war came four years after a pro-democracy uprising forced the military’s ouster of the country’s longtime dictator Omar al-Bashir that was followed by a short-lived transition to democracy. It has killed more than 24,000 people so far, according to the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data, a group monitoring the conflict since it started.

Global attention has been shifted to the Middle East since the militant group Hamas launched its attack on southern Israel in October last year, triggering a war that has killed about 42,000 people in Gaza. The health ministry in Hamas-run Gaza does not differentiate between militants and civilians but say more than half of the dead were women and children. Hamas’ attack killed about 1,200 people in Israel, mostly civilians.

14 million people have been displaced, while another 8.5 million people are facing emergency levels of food insecurity

Now, international efforts are focusing on the Israel-Hezbollah war in Lebanon amid mounting concerns about a regional war between Israel and Iran. “We have done everything to respond to the war in Gaza and the war in Lebanon. Sudan also needs this level of attention.”

The Sudanese military has been pursuing a major offensive since September to retake RSF-controlled areas in and around the capital, Khartoum. The military also captured Jebel Moya, a strategic mountainous area in Gezira province, in a major setback for the RSF, which also lost other areas in Gezira and nearby Sinnar province. The conflict pushed the country to the brink of famine, which was already confirmed in July in the Zamzam camp for displaced people, which is located about 15 kilometers from North Darfur’s embattled capital of al-Fasher, according to global experts from the Famine Review Committee. About 25.6 million people — more than half of Sudan’s population — are expected to face acute hunger this year, they warned.

credit // ap

Mozambique

Mozambique's government imposes ban on demonstrations, after weeks of deadly post-election protests

Mozambique's government has imposed a ban on demonstrations, after deadly post-election protests broke out in October. It insists the move is needed to restore public order. The country's interior minister has called on residents to cooperate with authorities to halt the protests, which he described as 'acts of terrorism'.

Police have used tear gas and rubber bullets during demonstrations, and last week the military intervened in a protest. Authorities have also limited nationwide access to the internet, a move that Human Rights Watch described as a bid to shut down 'public criticism of the government'.

According to Human Rights watch, more than a dozen people have been killed and scores more injured since the tensions broke out in early October. South Africa shut its main border with the country, citing safety concerns. The unrest comes after October's disputed presidential election. Frelimo were declared as the winner; the party has governed Mozambique for nearly five decades. Opposition groups and observers insist that the election was rigged, an accusation that the government rejects.

Britain has imposed sanctions on Angola's Isabel dos Santos, a billionaire businesswoman and daughter of a former president, as part of a crackdown on money laundering promised by the new Labour government.

The measures also impact an exiled Ukrainian oligarch, Dmytro Firtash, and Aivars Lembergs, one of Latvia's richest men. Describing the three tycoons as "notorious kleptocrats", it has frozen their UK assets and implemented a travel ban on them.

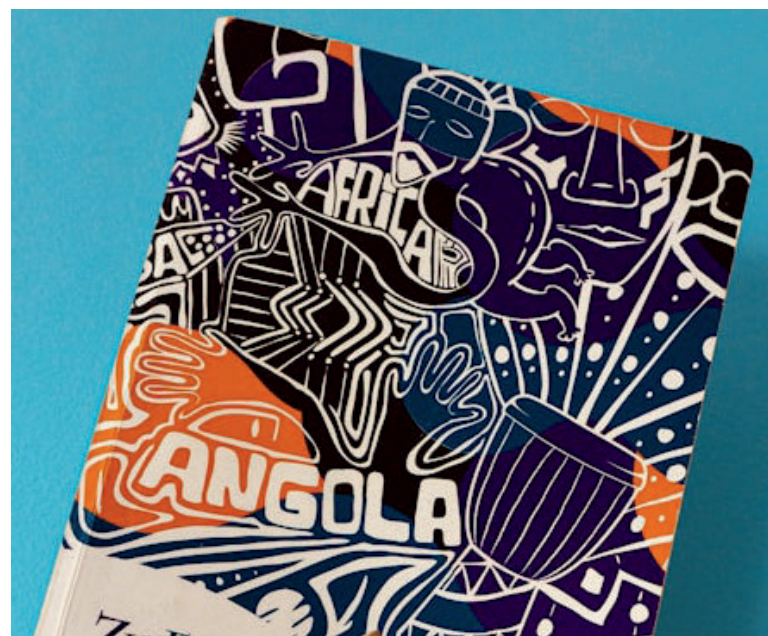
Britain's foreign secretary said they "selfishly deprive their fellow citizens of much-needed funding for education, healthcare and infrastructure - for their own enrichment". London says dos Santos abused her position at Angolan state oil company, Sonangol and telecoms company, Unitel, to embezzle at least \$440 million.

Dos Santos, whose late father, Jose Eduardo dos Santos ruled Angola for 38 years – claims to be Africa's first female billionaire.

Her downfall began soon, soon after a new president came to power in 2017, and in the past few years she has faced numerous corruption charges in multiple countries. She has denied the allegations saying she is the target of a political vendetta. Dos Santos has described the British sanctions as "incorrect and unjustified" adding that she was not given an opportunity to defend herself and will appeal the decision.

Angola

UK sanctions Angola's Isabel dos Santos in corruption crackdown



credit // africanews

photo // unsplash

UK-Caribbean Trade and Investment Summit brings UK export opportunities

The UK-Caribbean Trade and Investment Summit 2024, held in London, marked a pivotal moment in strengthening economic ties between the United Kingdom and the Caribbean.

The summit brought together government representatives, business leaders, and investors from the UK and Caribbean, focusing on expanding trade and investment partnerships. Hosted by UK Export Finance (UKEF), this forum aimed to showcase how UK businesses can play a key role in supporting the Caribbean's ambitious growth through infrastructure, energy, and development projects. Delegates participated in workshops emphasising the huge potential represented by trade and investment between the UK and rapidly growing Caribbean economies. This was supported by UKEF, which under its mandate can help UK businesses access billions of pounds in financial support to deliver high priority projects in the Caribbean. Given positive macroeconomic developments for many Caribbean markets over the past year, UKEF now has more capacity to finance projects than the previous year especially across Jamaica, Guyana, and Trinidad & Tobago, generating significant opportunity for British business.

UKEF financing support is also now available for projects in Grenada, St Lucia and St Kitts & Nevis which will benefit UK exporters to these markets. Tim Reid, CEO of UK Export Finance, said: "The UK can offer quality and innovation which make it a partner of choice for trade and investment in the Caribbean. There are huge opportunities for UK business to support the region's major investment in infrastructure and energy security."



credit // ukexportfinance

Rwanda

Electric shift for motorcycles in Rwanda

In January 2025, Kigali will transform its public transport system by banning the registration of gasoline-powered motorcycles for transport. Only electric motorcycles will be authorized, as part of Rwanda's electric mobility strategy. However, this transition will pose major financial challenges for owners and operators of gasoline-powered motorcycles.

Currently, about 20% of trips in Kigali are made by petrol-powered motorcycle taxis, which contribute significantly to air pollution. The country's Climate and Nature Finance Strategy, launched in October 2023, aims to reduce emissions by 38% by 2030. It also proposes measures to attract green investments, with tax incentives for private sector participation in climate-friendly initiatives. Currently, Rwanda spends about Rwf23 billion on fuel imports each year, while electric motorcycles would require only Rwf14 billion per year for electricity, which is produced locally.

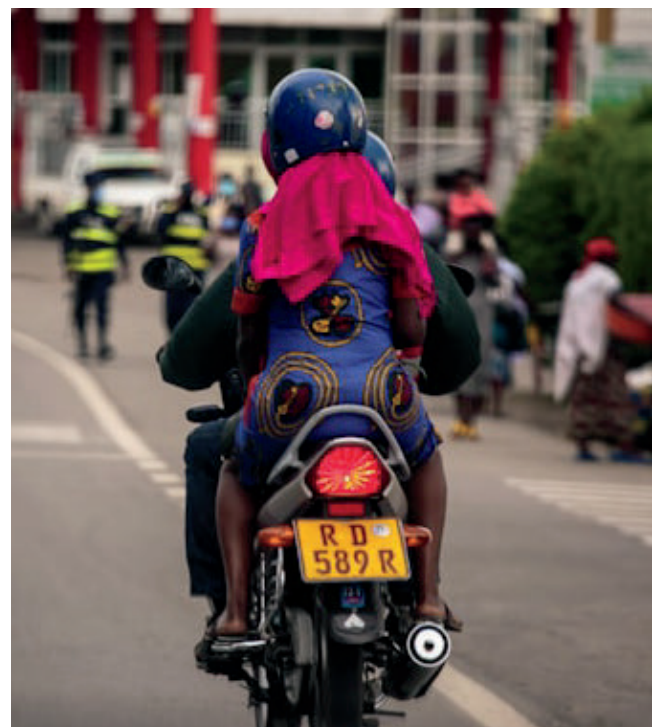


photo // unsplash

AFRICA & THE CARIBBEAN

Botswana



photo // unsplash

Thousands of people from around Botswana attended the inauguration of their country's new president, Duma Boko, who called for unity after an election that brought an end to the former ruling party's 58 years in power. His Umbrella for Democratic Change, a coalition of Botswana National Front and the Alliance for Progressives won 36 parliamentary seats and denied former president Mokgweetsi Masisi a second term.

Addressing the nation in his first official speech as president, Boko encouraged those in attendance to give his predecessor — who was often subjected to jeers — some love and praised his willingness to concede power without incident. He described the change of government in Botswana as a historic moment and stressed the need to avoid squabbles and personal rifts. "This is indeed a historic moment most humbling and most sobering. It is one of the rarest moments that can only be acknowledged in retrospect," he said. He expressed his love for his country and the appreciation they had shown him in electing him to the country's highest office. "It gives me great pleasure when I look at you and you look back at me and say that's my boy. You say so because you raised the boy. You love the boy. You know and understand that this boy loves you," said Boko in a colorful inauguration speech fueled by optimism but thin on details of his party's plans for national development.

During the campaign, his party promised to fight corruption and introduce a minimum wage of 4,000 Pula (\$302) per month, unemployment allowance and to increase old age benefits and build new enterprises. A recent Afrobarometer survey shows that unemployment is the most pressing concern for citizens, far surpassing other issues such as health, crime, poverty, education and corruption.



Can Botswana Shift Beyond Diamonds?

Official statistics show that unemployment has increased to 27.6% in 2024 from 25.9% in 2023. Diamonds account for 80% of Botswana's exports but the global downturn in demand for mined diamonds has affected the revenues of Debswana, the mining company the government owns with mining conglomerate De Beers, each with a 50% share. There have been calls for Botswana to have increased ownership and to benefit more from the arrangement. The new administration arrives at a time of heightened economic uncertainty.

Unemployment continues to rise, and global demand for diamonds, a cornerstone of the country's economy, is slowing. As the world's second-largest producer of natural diamonds, Botswana faces a pressing need to diversify its economy away from diamond dependence. Experts argue that assertive negotiations with key players like De Beers may be critical in this new era. Political and economic risk analyst Marisa Lourenco shares insights into the government's approach, discussing the potential impacts of lab-grown diamonds and the viability of alternative economic sectors.

The recent local elections marked an historic moment for Hartlepool Borough Council as it welcomed its first councillors from minority ethnic backgrounds. Councillor Quewone (Que) Bailey-Fleet, whose family are from Jamaica, and Councillor Aaron Roy, who hails from Kerala, India, were elected in the Rossmere and Hart wards respectively.

Both have expressed their profound gratitude to voters for the faith they have placed in them, and they have also described their pride in making the new Labour Council the most diverse in the Borough's history. Both councillors bring talent, specific expertise and new ideas to the Council.

Councillor Roy is a registered nurse, with experience as an operations specialist, and holds a Master's Degree in Strategic and Healthcare Management. He is also an elected Public Governor for the North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust.

He said: "It is truly humbling to have been elected to serve the people of Hart ward and I'm already getting down to work supporting the people of our great borough. My Indian background gives me a rich political heritage, which takes an inclusive and collaborative approach to public service. To be elected, along with Que, as the first BAME Councillors in our borough is truly an honour and I will work tirelessly to repay the public's faith in me."

Councillor Bailey-Fleet is a law student at Teesside University, as well as being a successful entrepreneur and a dedicated social activist. She brings a wealth of diverse perspectives to local government, having led social development programmes in Jamaica and New York. Having married a Hartlepool man, she has chosen Hartlepool as her adoptive home and together they are raising their young family here. Her focus is addressing the pressing issues that affect the Borough. She said: "I'm deeply honoured to serve Rossmere residents as their councillor, marking a historic moment as the first Black individual to hold such a position in our borough's history. The challenges we face are huge. From child poverty to the closure of businesses on our high streets, and the need for better management of public facilities, I am dedicated to seeking solutions. We need more police to tackle the crime and drug epidemic, greater investment in education to empower our youth and improved healthcare services, as well as preserving our borough's rich heritage."

Black representation is a big deal for us

Representation matters because what we see in the media doesn't just reflect reality – it also shapes it. On the other hand, positive representation can shift public opinion for the better and create greater understanding and appreciation between cultures and communities. We welcome these opportunities where members from the Black community can sit in the high places where decisions are made - Editor

"I'm deeply honoured to serve Rossmere residents as their councillor, marking a historic moment as the first Black individual to hold such a position in our borough's history."

Quewone Bailey-Fleet elected first Black female councillor in Hartlepool



photo // [quewonebaileyfleet](https://www.facebook.com/quewonebaileyfleet/)/facebook

LOCAL NEWS

Teesside's inaugural Black Business Community Awards & Dinner attracted a diverse and passionate gathering of business leaders, entrepreneurs and community supporters from across Teesside.

The event celebrated the achievements and contributions of black-owned businesses in Teesside, showcasing the innovation, resilience and creativity that define the local black business community. Hosted at state-of-the-art venue, The Staiths at AV Dawson's Port of Middlesbrough site, the evening saw more than 150 guests attend.

The awards ceremony celebrated the incredible journeys of Black entrepreneurs across a range of sectors, from innovation and technology to creative industries and social enterprise. The event featured thought-provoking speeches from influential leaders in business and community development, including keynote addresses from Tees Valley Business Board member Imran Anwar, founder and CEO of Middlesbrough tech business Alt Labs.

Imran said: "It was a real privilege to play a part in the inaugural Black Business Community Awards. At the Tees Valley Business Board, we recognise the vital importance of fostering a community where every business, regardless of background, has the resources, support and opportunities they need to thrive.

"Awards like this give us the space to honour the perseverance, creativity and dedication of black businesses and entrepreneurs as an invaluable part of our economic and cultural fabric. Congratulations to all the nominees and winners. Your accomplishments serve as an inspiration and your contributions are invaluable."

The night saw multiple awards presented across several categories, including The Overcome, awarded to an individual that has shown outstanding resilience to overcome significant challenges, The Apprentice award recognising young individuals who demonstrate high levels of entrepreneurship and innovation, The Fashionista, awarded to a business making strides in the fashion industry, and an Honorary Award, given to a business that continues to support the black community in Teesside.

The winners, selected from a pool of highly deserving nominees, were celebrated not only for their business acumen but also for their contributions to social change, inclusivity, and local economic growth. The dinner served as a vital networking hub, bringing together businesses from all industries, alongside local officials, investors and representatives from various business support organisations. It highlighted the power of collaboration and the importance of creating platforms for underrepresented groups to thrive.

credit // **teesbusiness**



Awards ceremony celebrates Teesside's black business community

Guests were treated to an evening of full entertainment by DJ Erv who was awarded for his contribution to the advancement of the richness of black culture through music showcase.

The event was organized by Sticks and Stones Studios, a collective of passionate individuals dedicated to supporting positive and meaningful representation of black community and advocates for diversity and inclusion in the Teesside.

They expressed their gratitude to everyone who made the evening possible. Kudakwashe Gumboreshumba Derera said: "The turnout and the energy in the room were simply overwhelming. This event marks a significant milestone in highlighting the immense talent and resilience of the black business community in Teesside. "We are proud to have created a space where businesses can come together, celebrate their success, and continue to build the future of our Teesside in all its diversity."

Sponsors included Tees Valley Combined Authority, Middlesbrough Council, Cello UK, Bensiri Consultancy and Ubuntu Multicultural Centre. The success of the inaugural Black Business Community Awards & Dinner has set a high bar for future events, with plans already in motion to make it an annual celebration of excellence. Organisers are committed to expanding the scope of the event in 2025, providing more opportunities for black entrepreneurs to connect, grow and showcase their businesses.

Major boost for North East space sector following £2.5M investment

The funding has been awarded to a consortium of academic, civic and industry partners who together will form the North East Space Communications Accelerator (NESCA), which is one of EPSRC's place-based impact acceleration accounts (IAAs). IAAs aim to deliver impact activities to benefit a research and innovation cluster, in collaboration with civic, business, and other local stakeholders. Over the next four years NESCA will build on recent investment in space skills, research and innovation in the region, creating new opportunities for knowledge exchange that lead to quality impact, including high-skilled jobs and economic growth. NESCA is a collaboration between Northumbria, Durham, and Newcastle universities, the North East Combined Authority, Space North East England, and the North East Space Leadership Group, as well as 14 industry partners.



The North East's reputation for world-class space research and innovation has been recognised with the announcement of £2.5 million from the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC).

It aims to support the UK's ambition to become a leader in the global space industry by bringing together academic research with business and commercial expertise to contribute directly to the growth of the national space ecosystem. Newcastle University's space research spans many schools, with a strong presence in artificial intelligence (AI) and spatial data analytics, earth observation, communication, and observational astrophysics

Durham researchers named on a prestigious list

Professors Carlos Frenk, Adrian Jenkins, Tom Theuns and the late Richard Bower from our Institute for Computational Cosmology, and Professor Yunfei Chen, from our Department of Engineering, have all been recognised in Clarivate's Highly Cited Researchers list for 2024. Clarivate uses careful analysis to compile its list of the most cited science academics from across the world who demonstrate significant influence in their research field.

Leaders in research

Professor Frenk is our Ogden Professor of Fundamental Physics and founder and former Director of the Institute for Computational Cosmology (ICC). He is a leader in cosmology research and one of the originators of the "cold dark matter" theory for the formation of galaxies and large-scale structure in the Universe. Professor Jenkins is the Project Scientist for the DiRAC supercomputer facility hosted at Durham and has conducted pioneering simulation-based research to further our understanding of astronomy and particle physics. Professor Theuns has significantly advanced our understanding of galaxy formation and the intergalactic medium through his work on cosmological simulations, particularly with the EAGLE project.

Professor Richard Bower, who sadly died in January 2023 aged 58, had been with the University for almost 30 years. As a Professor of Astronomy, his research spanned observational and theoretical studies of galaxy formation. He also helped develop SWIFT, a revolutionary new approach to high-performance computing.

Professor Yunfei Chen, from our Department of Engineering, is an expert in wireless communications and signal processing, including wireless system designs, wireless sensing, THz communications, machine learning for wireless and hybrid satellite-terrestrial networks. Professor Chen's work has received many accolades for best papers.



Universities & Colleges

In today's fast-moving, technology-driven economy, upskilling is no longer a choice but a necessity. Recognising this need, Middlesbrough College has secured a £1.5 million investment, initially sourced from the Department for Education as part of a Skills Bootcamp pilot known as 'Project S', and supplemented by additional funding from the Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA). This dual funding stream provides a significant boost to Skills Bootcamp offerings, supporting a wide range of local industries.

The up to 16-week programmes focus on upskilling the local workforce in critical areas such as digital marketing, electric vehicle maintenance and welding. For Tees Valley businesses, this initiative offers a unique opportunity to address current skill shortages and future-proof operations. Moreover, the Skills Bootcamps can be leveraged to recruit new entrants to the business, equipping candidates with the specific skills required to seamlessly step into vacancies. Co-created by employers and colleges, the bootcamps are designed to be flexible and effective, ensuring that participants gain the practical skills needed to excel in their roles within the organisation.

Collaboration with Local Businesses

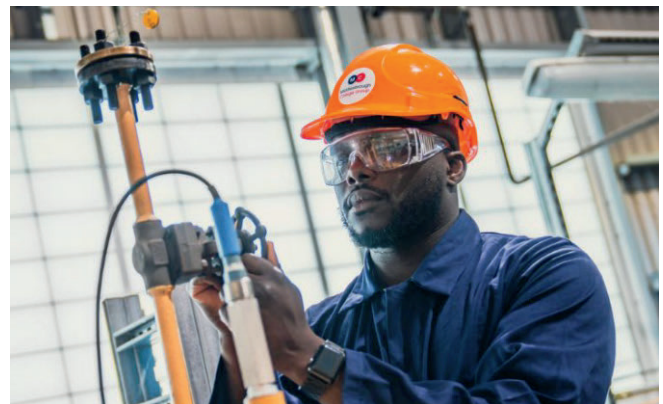
The £1.5 million funding allows Middlesbrough College to offer training at Levels 3, 4 and 5 across a range of industries. Crucially, these bootcamps are developed in partnership with local businesses, offering bespoke training solutions that directly address the workforce needs of each company. James Barwick, Head of Business Development at Middlesbrough College, emphasises the programme's flexibility: "Our skills bootcamps are designed with flexibility in mind, offering employers and learners the chance to upskill in a delivery model that suits all, while balancing work and personal commitments"

This flexible delivery model is essential for industries such as manufacturing and engineering, where withdrawing employees from production to upskills can be costly. Skills Bootcamps offer an opportunity to design a programme that works for the employer and employee, enabling workers to acquire new skills while remaining on the job.

Upskilling the Existing Workforce

For businesses seeking to recruit brand-new candidates from a bootcamp, the programme is fully funded with no contribution from the employer required. However, if a business is using the programme to upskill its existing workforce, there is a 10% cost for businesses with fewer than 250 employees, and a 30% cost for businesses with over 250 employees. The cost of the bootcamp is variable, dependent upon the content and duration. Middlesbrough College has already started working with companies to co-create bespoke bootcamps. It is also an opportunity for groups of employers to work together in a particular sector, to develop the required skills in the workforce

£1.5m Skills Bootcamp Boost for Middlesbrough College



Who are Skills Bootcamps for?

Skills Bootcamps are designed for individuals with a solid understanding of their chosen subject, as the courses are offered at intermediate and advanced levels (levels 3 to 5).

Self-employed?

These courses can help you enhance your career and secure more work.

Employer?

Skills Bootcamps provide a valuable opportunity for your employees to upskill.

To be eligible for our Skills Bootcamps, you must be aged 19 or older, live in the Tees Valley and currently unemployed or employed and earning less than £33,210 per annum.

Are they completely free?

For independent and self-employed learners who meet the eligibility requirements, these courses are fully funded. However, if you're an employer looking to use Skills Bootcamps to train your workforce, a small contribution is required. We'll provide more details upon receiving your enquiry.



Ofsted has introduced a number of changes to inspection from September 2024

These changes only apply to the inspection of state-funded schools. They do not apply to the inspection of other settings inspected under the Education Inspection Framework (EIF). The key changes to the inspection of state-funded schools from September 2024 are:

Removal of the grade for overall effectiveness from graded inspections: Ofsted will, however, continue to grade the four sub-areas (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management).

Replacing deep dives in ungraded inspections with 'areas of focus' - this is intended to offer greater flexibility during inspection. Inspectors will still follow Ofsted's three-stage process (top-level view; collecting, connecting and considering the evidence; and 'bringing it all together'). However, inspectors will have greater flexibility about how evidence is gathered as part of an area of focus. This means that inspectors could just use one or two of the approaches to gathering evidence. The indication is that inspectors are likely to make greater use of joint visits to lessons with school leaders and of talking to pupils. **In graded inspections, Ofsted will continue to conduct deep dives.** Deep dives usually include the following activities: talking to leaders about the curriculum; joint visits with leaders to lessons; work scrutiny; talking to pupils and observing pupils; and discussions with teachers.

In ungraded inspections, inspecting groups of subjects rather than single subjects - in practice, this is likely to mean that inspectors speak to subject leaders as a group rather than individually.=

In ungraded inspections, inspectors will examine three or four 'areas of focus'. Ofsted says that at least two of the areas of focus should relate to quality of education for a group of subjects. The other area(s) of focus should be things that leaders are focusing on addressing which are covered in other parts of the EIF. This means that an area of focus could be something that falls under behaviour and attitudes, personal development or leadership and management.

Groups of subjects could be subject groupings e.g. arts or humanities, subjects that are relevant to a school's context, e.g. subjects that have similar results or challenges in relation to pupil outcomes, or something else. **The areas of focus are likely to be identified in consultation with school leaders.**

In primary schools, one of the 'areas of focus' will normally be early English, including early reading, and maths.



In ungraded inspections, inspectors will place greater emphasis on inspectors maintaining a professional dialogue with school leaders throughout the inspection - there will be regular keep-in-touch meetings throughout the inspection; school leaders are likely to be invited to co-construct the inspection timetable; and inspectors are likely to undertake more lesson visits with leaders.

Notifying a school on a Monday (or Tuesday if Monday is a bank holiday) in the week that the school will be inspected later that week.

In some instances, where safeguarding is the only issue, Ofsted will operate a 'suspend and return' of inspection - this is intended to give the school time to address the issues before the inspection is completed and its use will depend on the nature of the safeguarding issues.

Reports of ungraded inspections will focus on whether the school has taken effective action to maintain standards since the last inspection, instead of judging whether the school remains good or outstanding.

In ungraded inspections, Ofsted has amended the requirement for inspectors to focus on **spotlight areas of behaviour, leadership and management**, which included a specific focus on workload and wellbeing, and personal development.

Inspectors are still required to consider whether the school is a safe and positive environment for pupils and whether they get the support that they need; whether school staff are doing all they can to achieve the highest possible attendance; and the extent to which pupils are prepared for life beyond school.

Inspectors are also required to consider staff's wellbeing, including their workload when evaluating leadership and management. They are also expected to be alert to evidence that the school may be gaming or off-rolling.

Commission calls for corporate courage to end racism in latest Chamber report

The North East Chamber of Commerce recently released a report which promotes anti-racism and inclusion across the North East business community.

The Commission on Race, Ethnicity and Discrimination in North East Business hopes the new report will encourage businesses to take action to end racism and discrimination and to promote diversity and inclusion.

The "Building inclusive places: Anti-racism in North East businesses" report urges organisations across the region to demonstrate the corporate courage to go further to create a stronger, fairer North East by sharing practical actions for businesses.

Nagma Ebanks-Beni MBE, chair of the Commission and co-chief executive officer of Prima Cheese, said: "Promoting anti-racism within our businesses isn't just good for some of us, it's good for all of us.

"Some of this report makes for challenging reading. People from Black and minoritised ethnic communities across the North East continue to face racism and discrimination, and this often spills over from everyday life into the workplace with racial prejudice forming a barrier to personal and professional progression.

"This is not simply a moral issue: it is a problem which is also holding back our businesses. There is powerful evidence to show that companies which embrace diversity perform better, and that inclusion creates better places to work, than those which do not."

Over the past two years, the Commission has listened to the views of business leaders, specialists and policymakers to produce the report.

Nagma added: "In sharing this final report, the Commission urges business leaders across the North East to rise to the challenge of identifying some of the social barriers which can prevent our businesses, people and region from prospering. By creating a fairer, stronger North East we form an environment where everyone thrives."

The report includes 20 practical recommendations for businesses across four key areas: enhancing your business through addressing racism; workplace education and training; recruitment; retention, promotion and progression.

credit // [northeastchamberofcommerce](https://www.northeastchamberofcommerce.com)

Rhiannon Bearne, executive director of policy and representation, and deputy CEO at the Chamber, said: "Supporting and encouraging diversity and inclusion is the foundation of a progressive business community. Now is the time to turn conversation into action.

"Whatever the size of your business, your sector or your role, each one of us has a part to play in making the North East the most inclusive, diverse and equitable place it can be. "At the Chamber, we recognise there is much to do, and we are committed to progressing this vital agenda. We look forward to working alongside businesses and partners from across the North East as part of this journey. "Under the leadership of Nagma, the Commission has made a significant contribution to an important conversation."

Rhiannon added: "On behalf of the Chamber, I extend my thanks to all of those who have supported and participated in the Commission's work, with special thanks to Professor Peter Hopkins, professor of social geography at Newcastle University. "The Commission and the report have been made possible thanks to the generous support of Newcastle University and its Policy Support Fund."

In 2021, we launched the Commission on Race, Ethnicity and Discrimination in North East Business. The business-led Commission met to explore, examine and understand the barriers to opportunity created by racial and ethnic discrimination in the North East. The Commission urges organisations across the region to demonstrate the corporate courage to go further, promoting anti-racism and committing to sustained action on workplace racism and discrimination across the region. The report and work of the Commission aligns with the Chamber's stronger, fairer North East policy plan which includes practical actions leaders and businesses can take in partnership to deliver fair and inclusive growth for the North East and the UK.



LOCAL NEWS

Leaders of the North East Combined Authority have approved a multi-million pound investment to create thousands of new green energy jobs at two key sites in the region.

North East Technology Park (NETPark) at Sedgefield in County Durham and the Energy Central Campus in Blyth, Northumberland, will each receive a share of £16.8m North East Investment Zone (NEIZ) funds to unlock the development of electric vehicles, battery technology, and offshore renewable energy. The investment will be made from the Combined Authority's £160m flagship North East Investment Zone (NEIZ), which aims to drive growth across green energy and manufacturing businesses and is expected to unlock around £3 billion in private sector investment over the next decade.

Mayor Kim McGuinness said it showed her commitment to make the North East the home of real opportunity by creating green, skilled jobs, delivering first-class training and building on the region's reputation in the offshore wind and renewable energy sectors. Mayor McGuinness said: "The North East is a manufacturing powerhouse, with a proud heritage, and our investments are unlocking jobs and training for local people in the industries of the future.

The North East Investment Zone stretches from County Durham in the South to Northumberland in the North and includes sites in Newcastle, North Tyneside, South Tyneside, Gateshead and Sunderland. NETPark is one of the UK's premiere science and technology parks and is already home to three innovation catapults and three national innovation centres, with 40 companies employing 700 people. An NEIZ investment of £11.3m will be used to unlock the next zone of the £100m NETPark phase 3 for future development and accelerate the development of a first commercial unit – expected to be 158,000 sq ft - in response to strong interest from potential inward investors.

This will involve the remediation of 548,000 sq ft of underdeveloped land, including delivering essential infrastructure works consisting of roads, groundworks, electrical grid connections and is expected to create more than 250 direct jobs and support 500 more in subsequent phases.

The works, to be led by Durham County Council's Business Durham arm, will unlock major investment opportunities that would otherwise be lost to the region, and will create significant opportunities in the regional supply chain. With contributions from the North East CA, Durham County Council has already invested £48m at NETPark and has committed to further investment of £24m subject to further funding being secured.

The Phase 3 expansion will provide in total 14 new innovation focused units across 16 hectares of space for offices, laboratories, and advanced manufacturing. Blyth's Energy Central Campus is at the heart of Northumberland's plans to revive the town by making it a centre of excellence for the renewable energy sector.

A major investment aims to propel the North East's green energy sector, creating thousands of skilled jobs and bolstering innovation in key industries.

£16.8 million push to power green energy



North East CA cabinet is set to pledge £5.5m to complete the funding package for the Energy Central Institute (ECI), a new 28,245 sq ft higher education research and innovation facility as part of Energy Central Campus, to be built on the site of the former Keel Row shopping centre in Blyth town centre.

ECI is a flagship project for the region and seen as a part of the 'solution' to respond to skills needs in the green energy sector and realise the opportunities for growth

The institute will offer advanced training and qualifications in the offshore and renewable energy sectors, offering a 'next step' for learners at the Energy Central Hub on the Blyth Quayside nearby.

Energy Central Campus is a partnership approach with the Port of Blyth, Offshore Renewable Catapult and Northumberland County Council as founding partners and a Board consisting of a number of key businesses (Equinor, RWE, TFKables/JDR Cable Systems and regional Universities).

credit // [northeastcombinedauthority](#)



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LOCAL NEWS

North East Mayor Kim McGuinness last month launched a new £1million fund to support grassroots community projects delivered by charities and community organisations.

The first round of funding worth £225,000 will deliver grants which support community cohesion, recognising the social pressures felt in every corner of the region. Kim McGuinness opened the Mayor's Opportunity Fund in a speech to the annual conference of Voluntary Organisations Network North East (VONNE), a support body bringing together hundreds of charities, voluntary organisations, community groups and social enterprises. It is anticipated that applicants to the first round will be notified of the outcome by the end of February 2025.

North East Mayor Kim McGuinness said: "My job as mayor is to make the North East the home of real opportunity for people who live here, and my mission is to end the days where children in our region grow up in poverty. The means to do that exists in our communities, thanks to the work of grassroots charities and volunteers, who sacrifice so much to help others. But after 14 years of cuts people in the sector are exhausted and running on empty. "As Mayor I'm determined to rebuild our communities, and one part of this is to back those charities who bring people together, tackle poverty and create opportunity for others.

"We will invest £1m over the next two years in projects that will make a difference in local streets, villages and towns all over the North East. And this is just a start, because we are also working to bring in more funding so the sector can thrive, and continue to offer support, hope and optimism to people all over the region." Community Foundation Tyne & Wear and Northumberland and Point North are partnering with the North East Combined Authority (North East CA) to run the first round of the Mayor's Opportunity Fund.

Rob Williamson CEO at the Community Foundation Tyne & Wear and Northumberland said: "We are excited to be partnering with the North East Combined Authority on this first round of the Mayor's Opportunity Fund. Alongside our colleagues at Point North we will bring our knowledge and funding expertise to work with Mayor Kim McGuinness so the Fund can effectively support organisations bringing communities together to make them more resilient."

Michelle Cooper, CEO at Point North said: "The Mayor's Opportunity Fund is exactly the kind of initiative we need more of here in the North East. Not only will it support organisations tackling poverty today, but it has an eye on the future - creating opportunities for people and places, so that anyone facing hardship in our region can look forward to a brighter tomorrow. We're delighted to work with Community Foundation Tyne & Wear and Northumberland to ensure this fund makes a lasting difference to the people who need it the most."

Martin Brookes, Chief Executive of VONNE (Voluntary Organisations' Network North East) and Community and Voluntary Sector Member of the North East CA, said: "It's great that the Mayor's Opportunity Fund is being launched and recognises the work of charities and community groups. This is especially vital now because we need strong and resilient communities. Funding to support this locally is a key part of that and I am pleased that creating and launching this fund is one of the first actions taken by the North East Combined Authority and the Mayor."

credit // [northeastcombinedauthority](#)

£1m Mayor's Opportunity Fund to help North East grassroots community projects



photo // [unsplash](#)

The Fund supports North East's commitment to a fairer North East through creating opportunity. The aim is to create opportunities to ensure the North East is a cohesive, inclusive and resilient region where everyone thrives and has the opportunity to contribute to the region's success.

Organisations seeking funding can find out more and apply via the Community Foundation Tyne & Wear and Northumberland website. **Applications for this round close on Friday 17 January 2025.**

Trade, aid, security: What does Trump's win mean for Africa?

Trade and investment

Joe Biden's outgoing administration "tried really hard to create an impression that Africa was a valued and important partner", W Gyude Moore, a fellow at the Center for Global Development and former Liberian minister said.

Biden struggled to match this enthusiasm with substantial deals and partnerships, Mr Moore says, but that does not mean his Africa strategy was fruitless. For instance, the US was praised for investing in the Lobito Corridor - a rail line stretching through Angola, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Zambia that will be used to transport critical raw materials. In 2023, the US, external said it had invested more than \$22bn since Biden came to power. But there are concerns Trump might roll back on this investment and trade. The soon-to-be president has more of a protectionist, insular outlook than Biden - one of the slogans for his first term was "America First". The African Growth and Opportunity Act (Agoa), which has enabled eligible African countries to export some of their produce to the US without paying taxes since 2000, is a key source of concern. During his previous administration, Trump said the scheme would not be renewed when it expires in 2025.

And during his 2024 campaign he pledged to implement a universal 10% income tariff on all foreign-made goods. This would make imported goods more expensive, and so African exporters would be likely to sell less of their produce in the large US market. Numerous commentators in South Africa - one of the largest exporters under the Agoa agreement - have predicted that cutting Agoa could have a significant impact on the economy.

Aid

Africa gets most of its aid from the US, which said, external it had donated almost \$3.7bn over this financial year. But Trump's last administration repeatedly made proposals to slash foreign aid worldwide, according to reports. Congress - where foreign aid had bipartisan support - rejected these cuts. Had the cuts been implemented, "traditional US policies with respect to health, democracy promotion, and security assistance in Africa would have been eviscerated," said the Council on Foreign Relations, a Washington think-tank.

As it became clear that **Donald Trump** had landed the US presidency for the second time, leaders from across Africa began tweeting their congratulations.



Immigration

Trump's views on illegal immigration are clear - during his 2024 campaign he promised to deport one million people who do not have legal permission to be in the United States.

This concerns Africa as in 2022, around 13,000 African migrants were recorded at the US-Mexico border, according to US Customs and Border protection data. By 2023, this figure had quadrupled to 58,000. Some of these hopefuls speak of fleeing war, persecution and poverty. This would not be his first dramatic anti-immigration policy. In his first term, Trump introduced measures that curbed immigration from several African countries, including Nigeria, Eritrea, Sudan and Tanzania. Kenyan newsite Taifo Leo reported that migrants from the East African country, who number about 160,000, are worried that they will face discrimination with Trump as president.

Security and conflict

While Trump has been away from the presidency, Russia has stepped up its presence in Africa. One of the main ways it has done this is through providing troops and arms to countries hit by jihadist militants, such as Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso. Russia's foothold has alarmed the US - the two are historic rivals.

Will Trump offer support to African countries in an attempt to push Russia out?

Lineker set to leave Match of the Day

Gary Lineker has said it is "the right time" for another presenter to take on hosting Match of the Day, as the BBC looks to do the football programme "slightly differently" in the future.

Lineker announced he will step down from the show at the end of this season after 25 years as host. A new four-year deal for the BBC to air Premier League highlights will begin next season.

"I feel this is now the right time," Lineker said of his decision. "I think [with] the next [highlights] contract, they're looking to do Match of the Day slightly differently, so I think it makes sense for someone else to take the helm."

After leaving Match of the Day, Lineker will stay with the BBC to front coverage of next season's FA Cup and the 2026 men's World Cup. Speaking on his podcast The Rest Is Football, he said this week's announcement was "basically news of an extra year contract" for him at the BBC.

"I always thought my next thing would be the end. I've been thinking about it for a long time. I've done Match of the Day for 25 years. It's been an absolute joy and a privilege to present such an iconic show for the BBC.

"But all things have to come to an end." The start of the new rights deal will provide an appropriate time to make a change on Match of the Day, he added. "The [rights] cycle starts from next season, so it felt like if I just do one more year would a bit weird.

"So I think to get a different presenter in place would be probably wise not just for me, but certainly for the BBC as well. "But I really wanted to finish on a major tournament [and] do the FA Cup as well. So you've not quite got rid of me just yet."

Speaking to co-hosts Alan Shearer and Micah Richards, he added that he will be 65 when his BBC work ends. "So it's pension time."

A few names have been suggested to take over the role and these include Alan Shearer, Alex Scott, Gabby Logan, Micah Richards, Laura Woods and Mark Chapman. There is no doubt it will be a 'different' Match of the Day.



credit // **bbc**

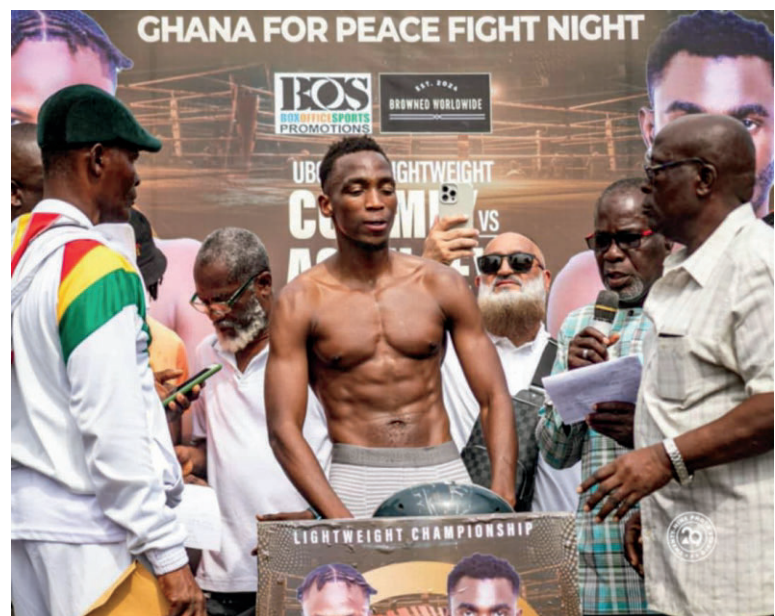


photo // **joemaphosa**

Local boxer hoping for more opportunities to fight in Africa

Yorkshire-based professional boxer Joe Maphosa, is set to return to his native Zimbabwe with ambitions to fight under The Zimbabwe National Boxing and Wrestling Control Board (ZNBWCB). Maphosa has applied for a local boxing licence and is eager to step into a Zimbabwean ring soon. Maphosa also recently recorded an impressive win in Ghana and is hoping that more opportunities like these will continue to come his way. Maphosa was born in Beitbridge, Zimbabwe, where he grew up with his parents and two brothers. At a young age, Joe and his family emigrated to the UK, finally settling in Middlesbrough. His interest in boxing came after watching Bernard Hopkins fight on TV. Since then, Joe has been a passionate boxer, being a part of both Team GB and the World Series of Boxing. Now Joe is a full-time professional boxer.

Superstars of music will be booking their East Coast Mainline tickets following the announcement that the next annual MOBO Awards will be broadcast live from Newcastle. The Utilita Arena will be hosting the major date in the UK's music calendar on February 18 next year.

Continuing the MOBO's mission to take its flagship event out of London (Leeds, Sheffield, Liverpool, Glasgow and Coventry have all had the pleasure), the 2025 ceremony will be the first time the awards have been held in the North East.

An event at the city's Civic Centre saw a performance from Newcastle artist, Kay Greyson, who recently signed to EMI North and celebrated the release of a new album, Chekhov's Gun. Fellow rapper, Kema Kay was also in attendance as the announcement was made. Kanya King CBE, founder and CEO of MOBO Group, said: "Newcastle is a city steeped in history, culture, and a dynamic sense of community alongside an electric nightlife, making it the perfect host city. "We are honoured to bring the MOBO Awards to this iconic destination, eager to deliver a show that will resonate far beyond the North East."

Cllr Karen Kilgour, Leader of Newcastle City Council said: "I am honoured that our city has been chosen to host such a prestigious and exciting event. Newcastle is a warm, welcoming and inclusive city. Our city is more diverse than ever before and our ever-developing music scene is a reflection of that.

"We know that being involved in music has enriched the lives of so many people who live here and provided them with opportunities they may never have otherwise had. And this ethos is firmly embedded in the MOBO Awards, so making Newcastle their home in 2025 seems the perfect fit." In addition to the main event, a MOBO Fringe Festival will see a crowd of events and activities running up to the big night.

Newcastle City Council and MOBO are working with members of the local community, North East music organisation, Generator, Glasshouse Centre for International Music, and Northern Roots to put together the Fringe programme which will celebrate Black music and culture in the host city. North East Mayor Kim McGuinness said: "I'm thrilled to welcome the MOBO Awards to a new home in our region – just the latest major event putting North East England on the international map for culture. "I know the Awards and the MOBO Fringe Festival across venues in Newcastle and Gateshead will be a huge inspiration for a new generation of young and emerging musicians working here in the North East."

The MOBO Awards have been celebrating and elevating Black music for the best part of 30 years - championing homegrown talent and rewarding artistic excellence across genres including Rap, Hip-Hop, R&B, Soul, Grime, Jazz, Gospel, Reggae, African music, Electronic/Dance and beyond.

MOBO Awards coming to Tyneside



About MOBO

Since 1996, the MOBO Organisation has discovered and supported talent in music, film and TV. MOBO operates 365 days a year to create events, content, partnerships and opportunities for young people in the entertainment industries and beyond. For close to 30 years, the MOBO Awards has remained a significant cultural event in the British music industry, celebrating excellence in Black music and culture. Its enduring legacy as the premiere outlet for recognising and honouring the artistic achievement of exceptional British and international talent in Hip-Hop, Grime, R&B and Soul, Reggae, Jazz, Electronic/Dance, Alternative, Gospel and African music has been unparalleled. Global superstars who have been part of the Awards include Janet Jackson, Diana Ross, Tina Turner, Sade, Lionel Richie, Beyoncé, Jay Z, Lauryn Hill, Amy Winehouse, Usher, Rihanna, Cardi B, Davido and H.E.R., just to name a few. The Awards has proudly been hosted all over the United Kingdom over the years including shows in London, Liverpool, Leeds, Glasgow, Coventry and Sheffield. Beyond the Awards, MOBO supports undiscovered talent in music via MOBO UnSung, and across the wider creative and tech industries MOBO supports and connects career opportunities for Black talent via MOBOLISE, a platform to empower diversity, excellence and transformation in the workplace.

Can you share a bit about your background and what led you to pursue filmmaking? Were there any particular moments or experiences that influenced your decision?

My journey into filmmaking has been driven by a profound passion for storytelling and a natural curiosity about the human experience. Growing up in Lagos, Nigeria, I was immersed in a vibrant culture teeming with narratives of resilience, hope, and identity that left an indelible mark on me. After earning my first degree in Mass Communication from Cotonou, Benin Republic, I honed my skills in storytelling, learning what makes a story compelling, whether in print or as a moving image. Eager to deepen my understanding, I pursued further education in South Africa, earning both a BSc (Hons) and a Master's degree in Film and Media Studies. Storytelling naturally shapes my worldview, and I find joy in crafting narratives that explore life from fresh and unconventional angles. My academic journey, which extended across Africa and the United Kingdom, enriched my understanding of the media world. It further equipped me with the tools to articulate structuring of stories in powerful ways. A defining moment in my path, I'd say was witnessing the transformative power of film during a community screening. Seeing how stories could ignite conversations, inspire change, and unite people confirmed my commitment to filmmaking as a medium for amplifying voices, addressing societal challenges, and creating meaningful impact. It's been an incredible journey of blending art, advocacy, and purpose.

As a Black filmmaker in the North East of England, what unique challenges have you faced in the industry, and how have you navigated them?

From personal experience, I'd say there's a notable lack of representation and opportunities for diverse voices in the creative industry, particularly for black creatives like myself based in the North East of England. Many others in similar circumstances would likely share this perspective. One significant challenge is the scarcity of resources, such as funding and grant opportunities, which often results from systemic barriers and economic disparities in the region compared to hubs like London or Manchester. Filmmaking, whether it's a short film, feature, or documentary, is inherently collaborative. It demands the collective expertise of professionals to bring a vision to life in a way that resonates with audiences. However, this process is heavily reliant on funding, which remains a

*In this edition we go one-on-one with renowned filmmaker **Michelle Augustine**. He spoke to us on growing up in Lagos and also gave us an insight into his current work.*

The world of **Michelle Augustine**

significant obstacle for filmmakers in the North East. Furthermore, there's a lack of infrastructure to support underrepresented creatives, such as networking events tailored for black filmmakers, industry workshops, or black led organisations that can assist with essential resources like documentation, film licenses, and fostering collaborations. Honestly, these are critical elements that helps filmmakers to succeed in the field.

To navigate these hurdles, I've focused on creating my own opportunities, supported by the unwavering encouragement of family and friends who believe in my passion for storytelling. I actively seek out events for black creatives in the region through social media and word-of-mouth, using these networking opportunities to connect with like-minded individuals. Additionally, I've leveraged digital platforms to promote my work and build a network of fellow black creatives, which has been invaluable in advancing my career despite the challenges

Who or what were your biggest inspirations when you started your career? Are there any filmmakers, artists, or cultural movements that shaped your work?

When I began my career, I was deeply inspired by the untold stories of everyday people—their resilience in the face of adversity, particularly from black perspectives. The rich cultural heritages and beliefs that remain underrepresented in media also fueled my

photo // michelleaugustine



creative drive. Filmmakers like Kunle Afolayon from Nigeria, with his authentic and powerful storytelling, and Duma Ndlovu from South Africa, known for his captivating television series that showcase the cultural richness of Black South Africans while boldly addressing social issues, profoundly influenced my approach to storytelling.

I also drew inspiration from black cultural movements that celebrate African heritage through art and storytelling, as well as the global push for mental health awareness. These influences shaped my passion for creating narratives that not only entertain but also provoke thought, challenge societal norms, and illuminate critical issues. This blend of cultural pride, advocacy, and storytelling continues to guide my work.

How does your identity as a Black person inform the stories you choose to tell and the characters you create?

My identity as a Black person deeply influences the stories I tell and the characters I bring to life. The Black community is enriched by a vibrant and diverse history, coupled with unique challenges. Being a part of this community allows me to create narratives that authentically reflect experiences often underrepresented in mainstream media. I am particularly drawn to stories that delve into themes of resilience, cultural identity, and the triumph of the human spirit. The characters I create are shaped by the complexities of navigating multiple worlds, balancing tradition and modernity, confronting adversity with strength, and striving for self-determination. These nuances add depth to their journeys and

resonate with audiences seeking genuine representation. Through my work, I aim to amplify marginalised voices, challenge pervasive stereotypes, and celebrate the richness of Black experiences. My identity as a Black filmmaker provides me with a unique perspective that informs my storytelling, allowing me to highlight universal emotions and truths grounded in culturally specific contexts. This approach enables me to connect with diverse audiences while remaining authentic to the stories that matter most to me.

You recently been recognised for your recent work, but You had a feature film out in 2022, *The Unexpected*, can you tell us more about the theme and your involvement in that project.

The Unexpected holds a special significance in my journey as a filmmaker, marking my first major project. The film explores themes of resilience, hidden truths, and the complexities of human relationships, capturing the essence of South Africa as the "Rainbow Nation." It portrays the lives of Blacks, Whites, Indians, Coloured individuals, and Africans from various countries who call South Africa home. Bringing these diverse elements together in a single film was an ambitious and challenging endeavour. The story, a suspense-driven drama, follows families from different racial and national backgrounds as they navigate unforeseen challenges. These challenges lead to unexpected revelations, shaping their relationships and personal growth, which became the driving force of the narrative.

Initially released on the video-on-demand platform Cinetie.com, *The Unexpected* enjoyed more than two years of streaming before transitioning to free viewing on A.M Visual Productions 'YouTube channel. This shift expanded its reach, allowing even more audiences to engage with its powerful message.

Tell us about *Imina*, what inspired you to come up with that project and the location, and where we can watch the film?

Imina is yet another project that's deeply personal project that holds a special place in my career as it marks my first rodeo as a film director. The narrative revolves around a young girl from a rural village determined to overcome the challenges of her environment to pursue her dream of further education. At its core, the film explores the tension between cultural beliefs and modern society, highlighting the courage required to challenge societal expectations and carve out one's own path. *Imina*. Whether through select theatrical screenings, online platforms, or special events, I'm eager to share this story and its powerful message with the world soon. Stay tuned for more updates on where you can watch it soon!

THE LAST WORD

Every year, we resolve to be a different person starting on the turn of the new year. But why wait until the New Year takes hold to start making positive changes? This year, challenge yourself to end the year strong. There's still enough time left to turn this year around – or at the least, to finish it with pride.

Make a list of things you wish you'd done this year
Just as we have to take notice of our triumphs, we also ought to take notice of the places where we sold ourselves short. Make a list of what you meant to accomplish this year, but never got around to. And then ask yourself how you're going to make sure you make it happen now.

Say 'Thank You' to the people who got you through the year.

Think of all your lowest points throughout the year. Ask yourself who was still standing beside you in those moments. And then let those people know exactly how much they've meant to you. Those who help us with an open heart often aren't aware of how much of an impact they have – so it's our job to let them know. And to give them the thanks they deserve.

Cut ties with unnecessary people

The person you need to let go of. The job that you need to stop working. The situation that has been dragging you down throughout the year – it's time to make the affirmative decision to let it all go. Why bring your baggage into the new year? If cutting off ties is going to hurt, let it hurt now. And let the new year be a place where you start over.

Forgive others

Forgiveness doesn't mean welcoming someone back into your life. It doesn't even necessarily mean contacting them again. It just means making the conscious decision to let go of any anger, resentment and blame that you've been holding onto. It means accepting that we're all fallible people, and allowing ourselves to head into the new year with peace in relation to that fact, rather than fury.

Accept the failures you encountered this year

It's tough to make it through the year without a single failure. But rather than dragging that beaten horse into the New Year alongside you, have the strength and the audacity before this year ends to let it go. To accept that you have failed. To let disappointment sink in, but also to revel in the freedom it allows you. We can't fight new battles if we're still waging war on the past. And there are so many other battles left to win.

THE END OF YEAR REPORT: How to finish the year strong



365 days is a long stretch of time – long enough for us to forget our own accomplishments and triumphs throughout. Sit down and write a list of every tiny victory you've encountered in the past year

Make a list of things that are going to get better

Once you've let go of the pain, disappointment and resentment from the past year, you're finally open to acknowledge all the amazing things that could replace them moving forward. Make a list of those things – and then make an active plan to achieve them.

credit // **thoughtcatalog**