



“Our Carnival [symbolises] the unity of our people resident here and of all our many friends who love the West Indies”

CLAUDIA JONES

Giving a voice to the voiceless

Born in Trinidad in 1915, Claudia Jones dedicated her life to the fight against intolerance, inequality and oppression. She migrated to Harlem, New York, at the age of eight with her family. It was here she would grow up to become a political activist and pioneering journalist giving a voice to the voiceless.

Considered to be one of the most important Black feminists in history, Jones championed Black women and made no secret of her lifelong mantra: no peace can be obtained if any women, especially those who are oppressed and impoverished, are left out of the conversation. “An End to the Neglect of the Problems of the Negro Woman!” was published in 1949 and helped to establish the foundations of intersectional feminism.

At the height of the McCarthy era, she was arrested several times for her activism and ties to communist organisations. In 1948, she was found guilty of violating the McCarran Act for being a non-US citizen who had joined the American Communist Party. As a result, she served prison time at Ellis Island. She was later convicted for what was described as “un-American activities” in a separate trial in 1955 and served an eight-month sentence at the Federal Reformatory for Women at Alderson, West Virginia, before being deported to the UK when British Colonial Governor, Hubert Rance, denied her entry to Trinidad.

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WHY ARE THEY IMPORTANT?

The birth of an institution

In 1958, Claudia Jones founded the West Indian Gazette - Britain’s very first Black newspaper. However, that summer, Oswald Mosley’s White Defence League and racist gangs began attacking the Black community brewing even more tension. In August, violent riots broke out on the streets of both Notting Hill and Nottingham lasting for five nights over the bank holiday weekend. Jones’s unconventional response to the events of that summer became the birth of what we know today as Notting Hill Carnival.

Claudia Jones Organisation (CJO) was founded in 1982 as a result of the identification of the needs of African Caribbean women and families in Hackney and surrounding boroughs. During the last 30 years, over 30,000 children, young people and adults have accessed the variety of services CJO has to offer, particularly in hosting events for women and families of African Caribbean heritage.

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