



CELEBRATING BLACK NEURODIVERSITY

In Honour of Black History Month UK, October 2019

The Counsellors Working with Neurodiversity Facebook Page wanted to use Black History Month this year to highlight the achievements of neurodiverse black people and shine a light on issues specifically relating to this minority within a minority. It is important that people of colour are included in the growing neurodiversity movement at all levels.

This document brings together links to various articles and videos about the inspirational black neurodiverse people/advocates themselves and family member allies who are making a difference.

By Lisa Cromar, Heidi Brown, Karin Brauner and Sarah Williams

For more information about our mission:

<https://kbraunercounselling.blog/2019/09/22/neurodiversityfbgroup/>

For counsellors:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Counsellorsworkingwithneurodiversity/>



("Who is René Brooks?", 2019)

René Brooks

René Brooks is the founder of Black Girl, Lost Keys. She is an inspirational black woman with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and an advocate for women with ADHD. She has a large social media presence and is a prolific blog writer of incredibly useful articles. René recently wrote an informative article relating to ADHD and setting boundaries 'It's Time To Get Better At Setting Boundaries.'

She has an eloquent easy to read style of writing and her generosity at sharing so much of herself and her experiences of ADHD in the quest of helping other women. She also runs a Facebook support group 'founded as a safe space for black women with ADHD (or parenting a black child with ADHD) to discuss the disorder.'

The magazine ADDitude recently named her one of '5 women with ADHD who are changing the conversation, what an accolade!

René received a late life diagnosis and 'Used it to uplift others.'

If you'd like to follow René's work, her social media details are as follows:

Sources:

Website: <https://blackgirllostkeys.com/>

Twitter: @blkgirllostkeys

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/blackgirllostkeys/>



: ("Stephen Wiltshire – The British Artist Drawing Cityscapes Entirely From Memory", 2019)

Stephen Wiltshire

Stephen Wiltshire was diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) at the age of three. He is a world famous artist, who can draw fantastic cityscapes from the briefest of glances.

In 2006 Stephen was awarded an MBE. For more about his amazing abilities, please watch the following clip:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IdKrgAEo8wk>



("Hollyoaks actress Talia Grant: My teachers didn't believe", 2019)

Talia Grant

Talia Grant, daughter of Pop Idol's David and Carrie Grant. However, she has made an impressive mark on the world of her own.

Landing a recurring role in Hollyoaks, she is known for being the first autistic woman to land a mainstream role in a UK drama series. An autistic actress playing the part of an autistic character.

She is a fantastic role model for autistic girls, particularly autistic Black/BAME girls.

She's featured in many emotional hard hitting story lines in Hollyoaks, highlighting and normalising autism. Check out this upcoming scene where she suffers an emotional/sensory overload. This is on National TV watched by so many young people:

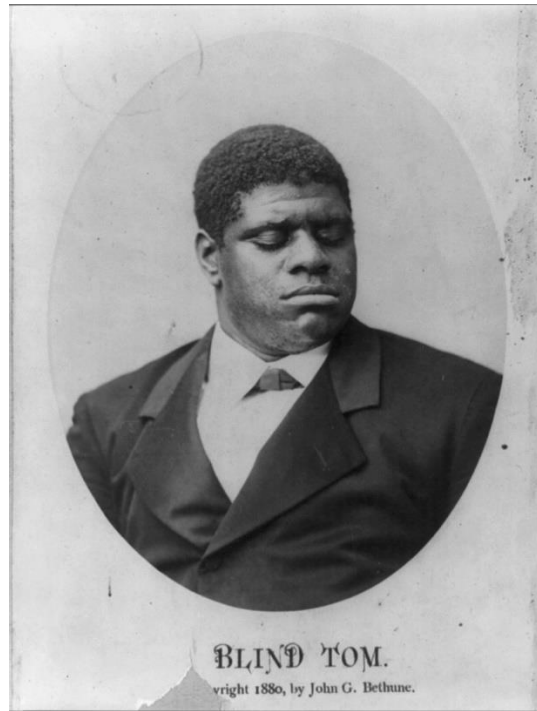
<https://twitter.com/hollyoaks/status/1172210956874723333...>

And this is a Hollyoaks featured piece on disability and diversity which Talia stars in alongside a few other wonderful actors representing diversity:

<https://youtu.be/DHxI7iodweg>

Please also give this podcast a listen, Talia and her sister Olive Gray talk about living with autism. Again, this is bringing autistic issues into the mainstream as this is a Hollyoaks podcast.

<https://podcasts.apple.com/.../dont-filter-feeli.../id1477628891>



("Blind Tom Wiggins - Wikipedia", 2019)

'Blind Tom' Wiggins

Thomas 'Blind Tom' Wiggins is thought to be the first black American to be described as what we now know to be autistic.

He was born into slavery in 1848 on a Georgia plantation.

He had a phenomenal memory and was fascinated by sound and could pick out songs on the piano by the age of 4.

At the age of 8 he made his concert debut at Atlanta.

At the age of 9 he was hired out as a slave musician, for the price of \$15,000. Despite the fact he was treated as a commodity, nobody can take his achievements away from him.

At the age of 10, he became the first African American to perform at the White House, performing a concert for President James Buchanan.

He was able to memorise and play pieces after just one hearing and could memorise text and poems in foreign languages.

For more about his fascinating life please watch/ read:-

Sources:

<https://youtu.be/hNJDaNbilpw>

<http://www.blindtom.org/>

It is so sad that black people were treated this way and his white owners seemed to be the ones to benefit financially from his musical genius. A shameful time in history.

And, let's bring this back to the modern day. Why have so many heard of Mozart, but never heard of Thomas 'Blind Tom' Wiggins? These are the types of questions we need to address as a society.



("Joshua Beckford",
2019)

Joshua Beckford



("Fixer Benice Asante-Boahene",
2019)

Benice Astante Boahene

The following film features Joshua Beckford who is making history, he was one of the youngest students to attend Oxford university at the age of 6, it is exciting to think what this autistic young man could go on to achieve and the difference to science, and the world that he could make.

‘Fearing that autism is misunderstood by some members of black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) communities, Benice Asante Boahene is raising awareness of the condition.

The 25-year-old from London wants to tackle myths surrounding autism, helping people to receive more support and education on the topic.

‘I’ve realised over the years that some parents from the BAME community, whose children have autism, struggle to come to terms with it,’ explains Benice.

‘There isn’t much support available for them and it’s clouded with taboos. I want to make people aware that autism does not prevent someone living a normal life.’

Within some communities, misconceptions about autism can include that the condition is a result of bad parenting.

Research has also found that services can be less accessible for members of BAME communities who don’t speak English as their first language.

‘The taboos attached to autism can be really severe. I hope that educating people will help them to understand that autism does not make a person less human,’ says Benice.

‘I’ve heard stories where a person with autism was branded a demon and had to endure “cleansing”.

‘Some people also believe that autism is a mental disease which can be cured.’

With Fixers, Benice has helped create a documentary to raise awareness of autism and help eradicate stigma.

She explores the talents of people with the condition, meeting nine-year-old Joshua Beckford, who was studying at university by the age of six.

Ken Greaves, a Senior Specialist Autism Consultant, also appears in the film, to share his knowledge of the condition and the band The AutistiX are seen playing a gig.

‘I want to show people the successes of those with autism,’ Benice adds.

‘With education, people gain understanding and acceptance.

‘I know that with enough publicity people will begin to understand what autism really is.’

Help Fix It – Share this story’

Sources:

<http://www.fixers.org.uk/.../1.../autism-in-bame-communities.php>

Watch Berenice’s Fixers film entitled ‘Autism in BAME Communities.’

https://youtu.be/x_Q0gZRRcs0



("Inclusion and Belonging", 2019)

Please see this important and worrying article about the disparity between school exclusions which puts male black Caribbean's with SEND at a major life disadvantage, making them four times more likely to end up in prison.

'A black Caribbean FSM boy with SEND is 168 times more likely to be permanently excluded than a white British girl without SEND'

'The individual and societal costs of ignoring inequities in school exclusions are substantial. Being excluded from school is associated with mental distress and long-term psychiatric difficulties and can negatively impact the wellbeing of already vulnerable individuals.'

'Pupils officially excluded from school at age 12 are four times more likely to be in prison by age 24.'

Sources:

http://www.crg.co.uk/news/?p=12405&fbclid=IwAR15F29_Xopeacmwyvta0B7m_8CCztFrwvBAU8y2dgxZxW12v3f8DQdY2GA



("Supporting BAME autistic people and their families", 2019)

Venessa Bobb

Below is an interesting article about Venessa Bobb who is ‘using her experiences as a parent to an autistic son to dispel myths about the condition and provide a support network to black and minority ethnic (BAME) communities who may be affected by it.’

Sources:

https://archive.voice-online.co.uk/article/autism-awareness-call?fbclid=IwAR1P_IV1uLu1fPxtzgK0RwbQkdWwRfU16egKRwHaECFC6g5h1SDF4VNU0JQ

And another important article written by Venessa about her experiences:

<https://a2ndvoicedotorg.wordpress.com/2013/08/19/venessa-bobb/?fbclid=IwAR2WpaVOKv1QaaMOqUF0iFBZ16T5viApjO0dByjs5zRif-KEID8TuJZ8kcE>



("Micro-sculptor's tiny works to go on show in Birmingham", 2019)

Willard Wigan

Willard Wigan MBE is the creator of the world's smallest handmade artworks in history.

'As a young school pupil, Willard Wigan suffered. Struggling to cope with lessons because of undiagnosed autism /Asperger's syndrome, he was regularly paraded around his Wolverhampton school as an example of what would happen to others if they didn't listen to his teacher.

The shock shut him down and for some five years, the already illiterate Willard was left barely able to speak.

By one of those bizarre quirks of fate, the experience was the making of him.

Today, he's 57 and something of a free spirit who admits to being a millionaire.'

Sources:

<https://www.business-live.co.uk/.../birmingham-micro-sculptor...>

See more about Willard by visiting his website: <https://www.willardwiganmbe.com/>

Here he is on the day of receiving his MBE:

<https://youtu.be/ZdNx7yJJvw>



("Jackie Pilgrim Talks About Blackness and Autism", 2019)

Jackie Pilgrim

In this insightful article, Jackie Pilgrim talks about 'blackness and autism.' A very interesting read.

<http://www.blackdisability.org/content/jackie-pilgrim-talks-about-blackness-and-autism?fbclid=IwAR0fIsmmtgszGVrJgndpQBi2iWwg4K-HA7fqU9VnJISieg-j3SIZtEIYX3U>



("Inside Katie Price's unique relationship with Harvey", 2019)

Harvey Price

The article below features Harvey Price's performance on Anna Kennedy's Autism's Got Talent. 'The show, which is the brainchild of charity Anna Kennedy Online, is designed to show what adults and children with autism are capable of and how the condition is no barrier to success.'

Sources:

<https://www.thesun.co.uk/tvandshowbiz/10125146/harvey-price-autism-got-talent-keyboard-skills/>



("BAME Parents and their Children and Young People with SEND", 2019)

An excellent article written by a white mother with mixed race ASD/ADHD children:

https://www.theplightofthesendparent.co.uk/bame-parents-and-their-children-and-young-people-with-send?fbclid=IwAR2V5WKi45Q3_XS8FSd7qkQwP5ajGdJrtQ-gKZFORTU0erNdnHrktNEf4UU



("Meet the linguist: Sarai Pahla", 2019)

Sarai Pahla

This is an enjoyable Ted Talk by Sarai Pahla MD. she talks about her experiences of dating and relationships as a black autistic woman:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MA7o6FgPRU&fbclid=IwAR1UdFQOLvanIReQ4RPbnrIVwa5KIW61_Hqw2xTuJcPXvMpJSrDo5rV4cFA&app=desktop



“

It's not out of cockiness. I've won five world titles and if I say, 'I'm the best gymnast there is,' (the reaction is) 'Oh, she's cocky. Look at her now.' No, the facts are literally on the paper. I think it's important to teach (young girls) that.”

SIMONE BILES
via USA Today

("Simone Biles Via USA Today",
2019)

Simone Biles

Simone Biles is an American artistic gymnast and five times gold medallist. Simone also has ADHD; she provides some invaluable advice below for young fans with ADHD:

<https://www.facebook.com/Understood/videos/2097702430256112/?t=45>



("Photos from Autistics United Fort McMurray - Cree, Dene, Dane-zaa, & Métis Territory", 2019)

Morénike Giwa Onaiwu

Courtesy of:

Autistics United Fort McMurray - Cree, Dene, Dane-zaa, & Métis Territory

7 October at 20:57

#Autober

October 7: Morénike Giwa Onaiwu

"I am here to open minds and to open hearts; to fill minds and to fill hearts; to change minds and to change hearts. That's why I do what I do."

Morénike Giwa Onaiwu is an autistic woman of colour, a global advocate for disability inclusion and HIV awareness, a college professor, and a proud mother. She is the co-executive director of the Autistic Women & Non-Binary Network and the co-chairperson for the Womens' HIV Research Collaborative. She also sits on the board of the Autistic Self-Advocacy Network, Felicity House, and the National Disability Parenting Research Center.

Onaiwu holds undergraduate and graduate degrees in international relations and delivering education to autistic & communicative disabled people, respectively. Her essays on the topics of autistic expression, parenting, diversity, leadership, and community engagement have been featured in Salon, HuffPost, Poz, Mashable, Iris/Conde Nast, PBS, Madame Noire, OutSmart, The Mighty, Positively Aware, The Atlantic, Romper, NPR, The New York Times, Spectrum News, Femme Frugality, Rooted in Rights, and Moms Rising. Onaiwu has been an invited speaker in the White House, at the United Nations Headquarters, and as a keynote speaker and/or presenter at numerous peer-reviewed advocacy, education, disability, and research conferences.

Together with Lydia X. Z. Brown & E Ashkenazy, Onaiwu was the editor of the world's first anthology on racialized autistic people, titled *All The Weight of Our Dreams: On Living Racialized Autism*.

Onaiwu considers her children, both biological children and adoptive children with backgrounds in countries all over the world, all with disabilities, to be her greatest accomplishments.

Sources:

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/mor%C3%A9nikegiwaonaiwu>

<https://awnnetwork.org/directory/morenike-giwa-onaiwu/>

<https://morenikego.com/about/>



("You're creative and you can focus on more things", 2019)

Will.i.am

Will.i.am, singer with the band Black Eyed Peas, also has ADHD, he firmly believes that it is an asset in 'fuelling his creativity.' See article below:

Sources:

https://www.understood.org/en/learning-thinking-differences/personal-stories/famous-people/celebrity-spotlight-why-william-says-adhd-fuels-his-creativity?fbclid=IwAR3vWRbQ3Eh4pC_Jh6URPUBAkjlg2V0C3CxuPyT15vRMnMgEY0Fk9QhqeWo



("Pam Kosminsky from Hinckley has published a series of picture books to help people understand what it's like growing up being different.", 2019)

Pam Kosminsky

‘Overcoming prejudice or trying to fit in can be very hard when you don’t look or act the same as those around you.

One mum-of-three from Hinckley is using her diverse heritage and storytelling skills to help children and adults understand what it’s like to grow up feeling different.

Pam Kosminsky, 36, has written three colourful books for her Just Like Me series, inspired by the challenges she faced growing up and now as the parent of a young child with autism.’

Sources:

https://www.leicestermercury.co.uk/news/local-news/mum-child-autism-creates-childrens-3351857?fbclid=IwAR0yeJ_d862UfS55B92B1-MZaiF_11Ja49Jyo6fNFdkB5CKL0LLRf_WVG2w



("Meet Amina Mucciolo—A Real-Life Mermaid", 2019)

Amina Mucciolo

Amina Mucciolo is a social media sensation with a following of over 250,000 followers on Instagram alone. Amina is also autistic. In this video, Amina answers questions about her life with autism:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zK9BBL3n_hI&feature=youtu.be&fbclid=IwAR34IvlcebVU4TbDJMn5hQDeoUUAObWVod49s2zSdb-bMoRLnwcDYeJ8Urk



("Young, Gifted & Black With Autism", 2019)

LaChan Hannon

'LaChan Hannon is 'Raising a young, gifted and black young man with autism comes with its own set, rules, rewards and expectations. Being an educator and a parent of a child with autism comes with its own set of questions that not just parents should ask but that the Education System should ask. LaChan Hannon ask the question: How does race influence how we see autism and the perception we have about our young, gifted and black children around the world?'

LaChan is mother of two, Nile (13) and Avery (12). Shortly after Avery's autism diagnosis at 21 months, LaChan and her husband Dr. Michael D. Hannon cofounded the 501c3 non-profit organization Greater Expectations Teaching and Advocacy Center Inc (GETAC).'

Sources:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kjw-z8xBFE4&feature=youtu.be&fbclid=IwAR3AErSKV1d9D3egeUMSgAbH5bYo_gWi5hdmxYUpf_4yzWx8h1Nt-3aS1ss



("Lamar Hardwick", 2019)

Lamar Hardwick

Introducing Lamar Hardwick, he was diagnosed with autism at the age of 36. He is passionate about increasing the voices of colour into the neurodiversity movement:

‘Open the stage to more voices of color. Call on those in the community that can provide our community and our cause with new experiences, new insight, and new learning opportunities. Create space for advocates who help build more beauty and strength into our movement by bringing ideas and resources to the discussion of autism. Help close the diagnostic gap between black children and white children by offering more faces of color to the conversation of early intervention and services. Let’s make neurodiversity a movement not just focused on diversity of cognition but also diversity of color.

Let’s build something that’s stronger. Let’s build something more beautiful. Let’s build something incredible.’

Sources:

https://researchautism.org/disabilities-diversity-and-a-discussion-about-black-history-month/?fbclid=IwAR2rHTMvTwD_blrViOsWhEWaKUIbSnZEtxyujVkJRam0RwO_zmdzZhyOr-Ig

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