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It is that time of the year that we fill our shopping baskets with colourful gourds and admire the changing foliage in our city streets. But with the changing of the seasons, comes another awareness of colour in our national consciousness: Black History Month.

Our local libraries display head shots of Zadie Smith and Chimamanda Ngozi-Adichie wearing colourful head-wraps and resurrect copies of Barack Obama's *Dreams From My Father* and Nelson Mandela's *Long Walk to Freedom*

. A familiar media debate ensues: is an entire month devoted to Black history really necessary? Is it an excuse for the media to sow the seeds of racial division with op-ed pieces? What about

“White History Month”—or Muslim, South Asian, or Latino history month, for that matter.

At first glance, Black History Month’s objectors seem like hardline Christians wringing their hands over replacing “Merry Christmas” with “Seasons’ Greetings.” However, as time goes on—and our cultural consciousness expands—a range of other criticisms emerge. Is one month enough to do justice to the cultural contribution of the entire Black community? Actor Morgan Freeman recently commented that it is “ridiculous” that Black history is relegated to one month. Others object to the month’s focus on the legacy of slavery and colonialism, arguing that it is reductive and negates the full history of people of African descent.

For University College London lecturer Jeff Bowersox, commemorating this history is essential to understanding the cultural contribution of Black people to Britain.

“As long as full and equal recognition has not been achieved, there is an important place for Black History Month in the calendar,” he argues . “There is no reason that it cannot productively coexist with other projects to point to the diversity of British experiences, past and present.”

Black History Month was first known as “Negro History Week,” and started as a way for Black communities in the United States to remember the people and events that shaped the African diaspora. Since then, it has extended to a month and expanded around the globe, where it is celebrated in Canada, October, the Netherlands and the Republic of Ireland.

While the original intention was to commemorate the past and celebrate triumphs against racist policies, some argue that this emphasis on blackness further embeds historical differences, reducing any progress in race relations. Does it make sense to create divisions when most children see their country as a a multi-ethnic melting pot?



[YouTube and the Black Community: A Platform for Representation](#)