



Africans in Tudor and Stuart Westminster lecture: History Masterclass 2021 teachers' notes

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Follow-up discussion questions

After watching this lecture, your students could debate one of these questions verbally or provide a written response for homework.

- Dr Kaufmann uses a wide variety of historical records that mention Africans in Tudor England to provide 'these tiny one-line insights into some of these lives'. What challenges does this create for historians when researching marginalised communities? In what ways could they overcome these challenges?
- What evidence does Dr Kaufmann provide of Africans in Britain living freely and encompassing 'a wide range of lives, experiences' during the Tudor and Stuart era?
- Dr Kaufmann argues that the Church records from the Tudor era demonstrate that 'through baptism, marriage and burial these Africans are being accepted into the community and seen as equals in the eyes of God'. To what extent do you agree with this interpretation?
- Queen Elizabeth I supported the first English involvement in the enslavement of Africans during the 1560's. What were the main motivations for her doing so at that time?
- Some parts of Britain, like Westminster, were much more diverse than other parts in the Tudor and Stuart era. Explain the reasons why.
- The Stuart era was a time when women's lives were heavily controlled by men. To what extent did gender impact societal roles in this period? Are there similarities between gender inequalities and racial inequalities?

Transcript

Hello I'm Dr Miranda Kaufmann and I'm delighted to have been invited by Westminster Abbey to host this History Masterclass on Africans in Tudor and Stuart Westminster.

I'm a historian and I'm the author of *Black Tudors: The Untold Story* a book based on my doctoral research into Africans in Britain living here between 1500 and 1640 so that's the whole of the Tudor period, and then up to the outbreak of the Civil War covering the reigns of James I and Charles I.

Although of course for the book I did focus in on the Tudor period and sneaked into the early Stuart period as well. In the book, I talk about 10 individual Black Tudors who we know more about because a lot of the records of Africans in this period are quite fragmentary. There's the title page, that's falling apart. Okay never mind that prop, get rid of the props.

So Africans were actually living in Britain in this period. All across the country, there are records of Africans at the Scottish court in Edinburgh, in northern England places like Hull all the way through to the south west down in Truro in Cornwall. They were scattered in sort of urban and rural areas, you find them in tiny villages like Bluntisham-cum-Earith in Cambridgeshire. But also in port cities such as Plymouth, Bristol and Southampton.

But then the largest numbers in London itself and there are records of over 360 Africans in Britain in that period. They were living a wide range of lives, experiences and doing all sorts of things. In the book I cover people working as musicians, trumpeters, silk weavers, sailors and we're going to look in more detail at two of those lives that have connections with Westminster today; John Blanke the trumpeter and Anne Cobbie who was a sex worker in Westminster in the 1620s.

But before we dive in, I'm just going to sort of hit it straight on. Why should we care? You know why should you sitting in your classroom want to hear about this at all? Why is it important?

Well firstly I think it's really important to have the full story of British history. Certainly when I was at school, I didn't learn about the Black Tudors and Black Stuarts. And so I want to change that and I want you studying now to know about this aspect of Tudor history and Stuart history because I think it opens up a much more global approach to that history when you start asking questions about who were these people, why were they here, how were they treated, what was that early encounter between white people and black people.

And this is 500 years earlier than most people assume that the first Black people arrived in Britain in the middle of the 20th century and that is just so wrong and actually the black presence goes back to at least the Roman period.

So it's really an important corrective to what was actually happening in this country. And I think understanding that past is vital to understanding what's going on in the present. We live in a difficult time with really vituperative arguments about immigration, about migrants, about racism in our society and I don't think we can tackle those issues unless we have a full understanding of our past.

And I think that the Tudor and early Stuart period is particularly important for that because this is the period where the English first start getting involved with enslavement and colonialism. We have John Hawkins conducting those early slaving voyages in the 1560s, and although there's a bit of a gap after that, it also then becomes the period where the English are establishing their first colonies. So Jamestown, Virginia named after King James I founded in 1607. St Kitts and Barbados in the 1620s, Jamaica in 1655. These early colonies are appearing in this period and that is obviously going to have a big impact on racial stereotyping and racial ideas in Britain and so I think in order to begin to understand how racism emerged in that period will help us understand how to tackle it today and I think that that's really important too.

So, without further ado, let's dive into my PowerPoint here and think about Africans in Westminster. So here we are: Tudor and Stuart Westminster. The centre of so much different activity. Let's look at it. This is the Agas map. This is a 1633 version of an earlier map but it really is wonderful. If you look at that website there, do click into it because you can do all sorts of fun things exploring it. This is Westminster. So this is the whole of London and you can see Westminster is to the west of the main city of London and it's actually a separate jurisdiction outside the London city walls. We can zoom in on it here. This is stretching all the way from down here we have Parliament House in the Palace of Westminster, all the way along the Strand to Temple Bar here, which was the gate to the city of London. And I've got some key sites to show you here.

So it's a seat of government as it is now and you can see the Parliament House is down here. That's Westminster Hall and the Palace of Westminster, so that's where the parliament met. But it's also a royal centre because the Palace of Westminster was actually a royal palace. Although Whitehall, which you can see just to the north there, became more of the dominant royal palace later in the period. We also have some aristocratic palaces and households along the Strand. One poet of the time wrote, "Thames ward all along the Strand, the noble houses of the nobles stand." Or something like that.

And we've got Somerset House which is still there in a different form, Arundel house, lots of other big fancy houses all along the river here. In purple you can see that it's also a religious centre. We're being hosted today by Westminster Abbey, there it is on the map.

We've got the Bishop of Lambeth's Palace across the river there and these are the little parish churches. This is St Martin-in-the-Fields over here, we've got St Clement Danes and there are a few other churches spotted around. And it's also a legal centre because in the Palace of Westminster was where a lot of the main law courts of the land met and it's also, these blue buildings areas over here, are the inns of court which is where lawyers learnt their trade and then networked later on.

And there were also all sorts of shops and exciting city things to do but you can see it is also you know surrounded by fields to the north and the west here. So you know St Martin-in-the-Fields is called St Martin-in-the-Fields because it really was in the fields.

But there was also a seamier side to Westminster apart from all these grand and important buildings and there's even some streets running off the Strand which were known as the Straits or the Bermudas because they're being infested with land pirates. And we get reports of shameful sins and incontinent life as you can see happening here.

So we're going to explore both sides of Westminster today. And we're going to start with learning more about this man John Blanke, who is the subject of the first chapter in my book and is perhaps the most famous Black Tudor probably because there's these wonderful images of him.

Well, who was John Blanke? John Blanke was one of the really exciting... (sorry it's not jumping around my slides here) When I was preparing this talk, I realized that John Blanke may well have been the first African to ever set foot in Westminster Abbey because he played at the funeral of Henry VII in April 1509. That's the Abbey, that's Henry VII.

This is his beautiful tomb and he also played at the coronation of Henry VIII a few weeks later and we know that because there are records of him being bought black clothing for the funeral and scarlet clothing for the coronation. And you can imagine there was an awful lot of pomp and ceremony around these occasions, which would have required a lot of trumpet playing.

Who was he? Well the first, what we think is that John Blanke probably came to England with Catherine of Aragon when she arrived in 1501 to marry Prince Arthur, who you can see here. Prince Arthur was Henry VIII's older brother and he actually died the following year and that gives us the first record we have of John Blanke in the records at all. This is a list of the trumpeters that played at Prince Arthur's funeral, which was at Worcester Cathedral which you can see here. And John Blanke's name you can just make it out here at the bottom of this list of trumpeters who again were being bought black clothing for the event.

[Correction: Since this presentation was given, Dr Miranda Kaufmann has clarified that the document being discussed from 09:40 onwards was from the funeral of Henry VII in 1509, rather than Prince Arthur's funeral at Worcester Cathedral in 1502. This means that the earliest record for John Blanke remains at 1507 as outlined below.]

And the next we see of him in the records is this record from the Exchequer, which paid all the king's bills and so in December, if we zoom in here. In December 1507 he was paid his month wages for November and this shows he was paying eight pounds a day (sorry not eight pounds that would be a lot) he was being paid eight pence a day which came to 20 shillings for the month. And that meant he was being paid 12 pounds a year, which was three times the average servant's wages in the period and you know this is very significant when we look at questions as to the legal status of Africans in England at this time because obviously enslaved people are not paid wages and one of the big questions about Africans in England at this period was their legal status and whether they were enslaved as Africans were in other parts of Europe and in the New World.

So we have this and not only was he being paid wages, but when Henry VIII came to the throne, John Blanke actually petitioned Henry for a pay rise and was successful. Partly because Henry VIII was a big fan of music and partly perhaps because of this very cleverly worded petition. He's writing this petition partly because one of his fellow trumpeters Dominic Justinian, an Italian trumpeter, had just died and so he said "Well, why don't you just give me the money you were giving Dominic as well?" and then he will have double the salary and he does get his salary doubled from eight pence a day to 16 pence a day. So that I think really demonstrates quite a confident individual, confident in his own skills.

The next we see of John Blanke is that he played the trumpet at the Westminster Tournament of 1511, which was held in the tilting yard just outside Westminster Hall. So roughly where Parliament Square is today. And it was a really big occasion and it was, you can see here this is Henry VIII apparently jousting. It's a bit of poetic license because they show him breaking his lance on the helm of the helmet of the other jousting but in fact that never happened. So they've just put this in there to flatter the king and you can see Catherine of Aragon watching with her ladies and the gentlemen of the court in this stand. And you've noticed that she is actually in bed. The reason she's in bed is that she had actually just given birth six weeks earlier to a son called Henry and that was why they were celebrating, in this huge two-day jousting tournament.

Here's a young Henry VIII, we don't always see him like this do we? This is young Henry VIII with Catherine of Aragon, painted as the Madonna and child. So they were having this massive party to celebrate the birth of a prince, although unfortunately he didn't survive much longer after the tournament. This is a fantastic painting that I love that as you can see has been inspired by this rather more stiff depiction. Stephen Whatley painted this and I think it captures more of the excitement of the day and so I'm just showing you that.

Now the reason we have these wonderful visual images is that Henry VIII commissioned this: the Westminster Tournament roll which is a 60-foot long vellum document showing this huge procession of everyone attending the tournament, that jousting scene in the centre and then a further procession of everyone leaving the tournament to go to a banquet. And that's kept in the College of Arms in London today and this is where we find these fantastic pictures of John Blanke. Here he is at the beginning of the day's procession with the other trumpeters, we can zoom in on him there, and that's at the beginning of the procession. And there's a second image of him as well here towards the end of, well actually straight after the jousting scene when the trumpeters are sounding the trumpets to show it's the end of the day's jousting and it's time to go to the banquet. And here he is zoomed in.

Here are the two images next to each other so you can see them and these really are very special because they're the only known portrait of an African in Tudor England. And at this point I'm just going to come out of the PowerPoint and read to you a very short bit from the book. Hello I thought you might like to see my face. I'm reading a very short bit from my book where I kind of imagined John Blanke's experience at the tournament.

'He gripped the horse tightly with his thighs, steadying her against the shock of the trumpet's blast. It had taken a while to master the art of playing the trumpet on horseback but now he was doing just that as one of the king's trumpeters at the Westminster Tournament. King Henry had decreed two days of jousting to celebrate the birth of a son to his wife Catherine of Aragon. He had also commissioned the heraldic artists of the College of Arms to record the proceedings on vellum. As Blanke watched the king charge towards his opponent, he considered that the artists might need to use a bit of licence when they recorded the scene for posterity. Best to show the king in some feat of great chivalric prowess, such as breaking a lance on the helm. It didn't really matter whether it had actually happened. He wondered how he would appear in the vellum roll on horseback amongst the other trumpeters of course, dressed in the royal livery of yellow halved with grey. The artists would enjoy painting the brightly coloured tasselled banners with their quartered fleur-de-lis and lions hanging from their

trumpets. The instruments themselves would be flecked with gold but would they remember his turban which set him apart from his bare-headed companions? And how would they depict his dark skin? It was not a pigment they would be accustomed to using. Indeed, it might be the first time anyone had painted a Black Tudor.'

So let's get back to this beautiful PowerPoint and there he is again and unfortunately we don't know much about what happened to John Blanke after this. The last piece of evidence we have for him is this intriguing document, which actually as you can see is actually practically illegible now but luckily, we have this transcription made by a Victorian historian. And it shows that John Blanke got married in January 1512 in Greenwich and Henry VIII gave him a wedding present of a fantastic outfit of violet cloth to wear on his wedding day. Which again sort of shows the esteem he was held in by the king.

But that's the last we hear of him and in 1514 there's a full list of all the trumpeters who were working at the court at that point and his name doesn't appear there. And so we're left wondering what might have happened to him. Well, musicians had quite a lot of travel around Europe at this time and there were African musicians at several European courts, so it's possible that he just moved on and went to work for another king, queen or nobleman.

Like this African who we see here playing with trumpet in the Field of the Cloth of Gold. So you can see from the flag on his trumpet that he was working for Francis I, the king of France. Some people have said this might be John Blanke but I like to think that it was probably a different individual because we know that there were several African musicians in circulation at this time. But that would be good.

Another opportunity might have been provided by his marriage so several courtiers are known to have married widows from the City of London and then taken on the trade of the widow's former husband, so that's another possibility. Unfortunately, he may well have died because there was actually a big fire in the Palace of Westminster in 1512 where all the living quarters of the royal palaces were destroyed, so he could potentially have died in that fire.

Or he could have gone to battle and died in battle. Trumpeters were very useful on the battlefield and there were two wars going on, mini wars really, in 1513. You had the Battle of Flodden against the Scots and the Battle of the Spurs against the French, so those are two other possibilities but like so many of these lives, we don't have the level of detail that we'd like about their lives. But there are all these fascinating snippets.

So John Blanke wasn't the only African at the royal courts in this period. Here, we have evidence again with a purchase of clothing actually of an African boy working at the court of Elizabeth I in the middle of the 1570s. And as you can see here she bought him a very fancy outfit of white taffeta, lined with gold and silver and all the matching tights and shoes and all the rest of it.

But unfortunately we don't currently know any more about him and we have even less information in some ways about this man. You can see here this is Anne of Denmark, wife of James I, and you can see she's depicted with an African man, a groom holding her horse there, and he's very finely dressed with bows on his shoes and his lace collar. This is 1617 but you know we don't have any more information about him at the moment. I hope someone finds some.

And we also have James I's son Charles I and his wife Henrietta Maria, also shown here with an African groom. So we have that black presence at the royal court. And we also have evidence of Africans in the households of members of the aristocracy and gentry at this period, so they would also have been frequenting the court in Westminster.

And here we have a baptism and a burial record of a man called Fortunatus and we can see from the burial record that he worked for Sir Robert Cecil and he's buried in Westminster in 1602. But we've been able to tie that up to the baptism record because Cheshunt in Hertfordshire, that parish, is very close to this house which was the Cecil's country home, one of their country homes at Theobalds also in Hertfordshire. We've got William Cecil and his son Robert who were the main men of the Cecil family in this period who are really prominent.

As you may know, William Cecil was Elizabeth I's sort of leading, guider, councillor and his son Robert Cecil rather took on that role and continued his career into the reign of James I. And so we have Fortunatus working for both of these men and so being kind of at the centre of things, at the centre of Tudor and Stuart political life. And you know so we know that he as a teenager was baptised from this house and then by the time he died he would have been working for the Cecil's in Salisbury House here, which you can see as one of those noble palaces along the Thames.

Another example was of a young girl called Maria who was baptised at St Martin-in-the-Fields in 1621 and the baptism record records that she had been born in Morocco but had been brought to London from Spain by Endymion Porter, who you see here, who was another courtier at the courts of James I and Charles I. And again this is something of a mystery because we don't know anything more about her but it shows this way of Africans coming to London, being brought here in the same way that Catherine of Aragon brought John Blanke and Endymion Porter brought Maria from Spain.

And there's another example where a young African woman was brought to Westminster by an aristocrat, in this case the Countess of Arundel, and we know that just from this short extract from a letter written at the time. And John Chamberlain actually seems more interested in the fact that she has also brought back a gondola from Venice. So they would have brought her to Arundel House here, which is another of those fancy palaces along the Thames. And the Arundels had actually been living in Venice for the last few years in the early 1620s amassing this huge art collection that you can see them showing off in their joint portraits here, and there were certainly plenty of Africans in Venice as you can see shown in this painting.

George Gage was a friend of the Arundels, they were part of the same circle, and Van Dyck was one of the artists that they were patronising. But not all Africans in the royal circles and aristocratic circles in this period were in domestic service. This is a fantastic portrait of al-Annuri who was the Moroccan ambassador to the court of Elizabeth I in 1600. And we know that he and his fellow ambassadors would have sat outside Westminster Hall again at the tilting yard on a special stand that was built especially for them to watch jousting on the 17th November 1600. Which was the Accession Day tilt and this was a jousting tournament that was put on every year by Elizabeth I to celebrate the anniversary of her coming to the throne.

And so we have that 89 years after John Blanke's Westminster Tournament, there is still an African presence in a joust in Westminster. And that you know the Moroccan ambassadors were at court to try and create an alliance against Spain who was their mutual enemy and they had actually earlier tried that in 1589, some years earlier, but it didn't work out and because the English and the Moroccans just had different objectives in their war on Spain and so it didn't work out. But it was you know a fascinating episode in our history nonetheless.

Now of course not all the Africans in Westminster were attached to the royal or an aristocratic courts. Beyond the court, the parish registers of Westminster show a further 16 individuals living in the area in this period. This is the earliest reference in a parish register, if you look about halfway down, you can see that Margureta, this is in Latin *septa fuit*, it means she was buried and she's described as a moor and so she was buried in September 1571 at St Martin-in-the-Fields.

I have another example here for you of a baptism record of Nicholas who had unknown parents and was baptised at the age of three or thereabouts. So they don't know, well he's clearly not connected with his parents anymore and it's possible that he had been abandoned somewhere like another little girl called Elizabeth who's recorded in another baptism record as having been abandoned in Somerset Yard. So probably over here one of the sort of stable yards outside Somerset House which was this one, one of the palaces along the Thames that I showed you earlier. Although by the 1620s it was in royal hands and Henrietta Maria, Queen Henrietta Maria was having it remodelled and so there's this record of this young girl called Elizabeth who's been abandoned there and it was fairly normal for mothers who didn't know what to do to abandon children somewhere where they knew they would be found and cared for and they would be supported by the parish.

And so we just have these tiny one-line insights into some of these lives. Some of these references in the parish registers show that the Africans were working as servants but others do not and it's possible that some of them were able to make an independent living because we have evidence of other Africans in London doing so, such as a silk weaver called Reasonable Blackman who lived in Southwark. Or a needle maker, whose name we don't know, who was working in Cheapside in the reign of Queen Mary. And there's even in Westminster a record of what seems to be an independent Black family when Anthony and Phyllis Faggiari have a son named Michael, baptised in 1620 again at St Martin-in-the-Fields.

And I think we can't underestimate the significance of these baptisms, burials and marriages such as that of John Blanke because they show a level of acceptance into the parish community and you think about Tudor and early Stuart society of such a highly religious society, that's really significant that through baptism, marriage and burial these Africans are being accepted into the community and seen as equals in the eyes of God.

And we bring that into sharp relief by looking at this newspaper account from almost 200 years later where you can see that by the 18th century people with Africans in their households were actually explicitly trying not to allow them to be baptised because they feared that it would make them be seen as free people, whereas this woman who is dragging, violently dragging, this girl out of church to stop her being baptised. She's enslaved her and she wants to retain her property. So I think that that brings into sharp relief the distinction between the later period and the Tudor and Stuart period where for

example we find a man called Paul Baining leaving five pounds in his will for an African servant to be educated in the Christian religion.

So I think it's important to look at that contrast and so looking at freedom and thinking about the fact that Westminster was a legal centre as well where a lot of these debates would be happening. The Somerset case which was held in the 18th century was also discussed in Westminster Hall and in the Somerset case where it was decided that an African man called James Somerset could not be taken out of England by his former master. They actually cite a Tudor court case called the Cartwright case of 1569, where it was decreed that 'the air of England is too pure an air for slaves to breathe in'. So William Harrison, a writer who writes about England at the time, explains that in the Tudor period, the view was that anybody who set foot on English soil immediately became free, as you can see in this quote here. And this does play out in practice so we have Diogo, an African man, reporting to the Portuguese Inquisition that this is exactly what happened to him as you can read here.

And another case that would have been heard in Westminster in the Court of Requests also underlines this point. So Hector Nunes, who was a doctor, merchant and spy, had to admit in this petition that he had no remedy under the Common Law to force an Ethiopian man to serve him during his life. And if you want to know more about this particular case, I've written about it in detail on this website. I'll share this link again towards the end of the talk.

And another example here is the deposition of Edward Swarthy who I also write about at much greater length in my book, but here I'm just adding this here to point out that he was an African man whose testimony was taken by a court, by the Court of Star Chamber, in a court case and you had to be free to be allowed to testify in court, so this is evidence of African freedom in Tudor England.

But now I'm just going to move on to talk about one other individual from my book, who appears in the book, and who is also living in Westminster in this period. Her name was Anne Cobbe and this is a kind of modern illustrator's idea of what she might have looked like and she was described as a tawnie Moore and that's quite interesting as a phrase. Obviously it's describing somebody, it's not a phrase used very often, if you contrast tawnie Moore with Blackamoor you can see that it referred to somebody of slightly lighter skin tone. Shakespeare uses the phrase to talk about the Prince of Morocco in *The Merchant of Venice* and also about Cleopatra. So Anne Cobbe could have come to Westminster from North Africa.

But given we're into the Stuart period here in the 1620s and her English surname of Cobbe, it's also possible that she'd actually been born in England, perhaps to an English father, a Mr Cobbe, and that might explain her lighter skin tone but we will never know. And she lived in the parish, well we don't know exactly where she lived. She worked in the parish of St Clement's Danes, this is St Clement's church here so we're talking about this furthest east part of Westminster.

And this is that sort of seamy side of Westminster that I mentioned earlier because we know that Anne Cobbe worked in a brothel belonging to a Mr John and Mrs Jane Banks. John Banks was a tailor and his wife was probably just running this brothel as a side business. And there were we know at least 10 women who worked from the house, although only two of them Ann Edwards and Mary Hall

actually lived in there permanently. Anne Cobbie rented a room there but she could have been like several other sex workers in the time, operating from different houses.

At this point I'm just going to come out of this PowerPoint and just read you briefly what I wrote about Anne Cobbie in the book, just again the opening section of the chapter on her.

'So Anne slathered the unguent over her arms, her shoulders, her breasts, her belly, her legs and her back. It was her daily ritual. Her soft skin was what the punters remembered, what they were willing to pay above the odds for. They would give a gold coin for the chance to touch her, not that she got to keep it all. Mrs Banks took her share but it was from her house that Anne did her most profitable business. Westminster offered richer pickings than Clerkenwell or Southwark, crowded with courtiers, politicians, merchants, men in town to pursue a case at the law courts, as well as the apprentices and servants who found the money from God knows where. She had bedded them all. There, she was ready. What did the French character in that old play call the Black maid? A black swan, silkier than signets plush.'

So let's just go back in. Right back to the brothel so as I touched on in that little extract, Westminster was really where a woman like Anne Cobbie could command high prices for her services. But we have more detail than that, she herself as it says here she herself and some of her customers had reported that they would rather give her a piece, which was a gold coin worth 20 shillings, than to pay five shillings for another woman because she had this wonderfully soft skin. And so people were willing to pay five times the going rate really for Anne Cobbie's services.

And as I said in the extract, there was a wide range of potential clientele for her in Westminster and they were also clients who could afford those gold pieces. But if we look at more of the records about prostitution in this period, the first thing we should note is that actually - Anne Cobbie is possibly the only clear example of an African prostitute working in London or Westminster in this period. So it was actually fairly rare. Whereas sometimes it became more common later on and sometimes people read that back but actually we have plenty of you know African women in this period in this country working as servants but also sometimes independent. There's a woman in my book who lived alone with a cow in a village in Gloucestershire; that's another story.

So I just wanted to point out that actually the London Bridewell records, which were where a lot of prostitution-related crimes were punished, actually show that there are actually more African men recorded there as visiting English prostitutes than there were African prostitutes mentioned. And this is one case from the Bridewell which says that you know this Anthonye a Blackmore was found in bed together with Jane Thompson, the door locked to them, so the door was locked so that was definite evidence that something had been going on and so she was punished.

And the reason that we know about Anne Cobbie at all is she turns up in a court case that would have been held in Westminster Hall. And I'll show you, look at the inside of here I don't know if you've ever visited the Houses of Parliament but this is a much older medieval hall that the modern, which aren't very modern, but the current Houses of Parliament are built around this massive hall. And I suppose it's most famously the site of Charles I's trial in 1649 but it was the site of all sorts of legal hearings over the centuries.

As I mentioned, prostitution had been illegal. Henry VIII had actually abolished the last legal brothels in 1546. And in 1625, a clergyman called Clement Edwards came up to London from Leicestershire and he was looking for his wife and he found that his wife Anne was actually living in the Banks's brothel in Westminster and he was appalled. And he decided to expose the Bankses and he took them to court at the Westminster Sessions. This was his indictment so he complained about the delinquent and terrible behaviour that was going on, the evil behaviour, that was going on in this house where Anne Cobbie worked. And he was particularly upset that he thought his wife was also participating in all of this and he found an ally in his case in Mary Hall who also testified to the court in 1626. And that's where we get the information we have about Anne Cobbie. And Mary Hall is clearly not happy with the Bankses as well she talks about how Mrs Banks sold her maidenhead or her virginity twice for quite a high price but didn't actually give Mary very much of the money at all. And this is where we learn about ten different women who are working from the house, where they all live, it's given plenty of details to contend the Bankses. And Mr and Mrs Banks are committed to the Gatehouse prison in Westminster as part of this case and they're there for most of the summer of 1626 but they seem to have left by October and we don't get any further trace of them.

And we also don't have any evidence of what happened to Anne Cobbie next. She doesn't seem to have been punished or prosecuted for her being a sex worker in this period either so she disappears from the Westminster Sessions records. There is one more tantalising record with her name that I found in her parish of St Clements Danes and in that same summer when this court case was going on and there is a Anne Cobbie who marries a Richard Sherwood at this time but there's no clear proof to link the two because there are other Anne Cobbies that appear in early modern records in this time. And as you can see there's no more information about this Anne's ethnicity here in the marriage record so we can't 100 percent tie them together. But there are several cases where prostitutes could leave the industry and get married so you know this would be the optimistic ending point of Anne Cobbie's story.

So there's a little plug for my book, these are two of the people we're talking about as some of those chapters and you can see those wide range of other stories.

But I was just going to stop sharing here for a second and just try and sort of sum up where we've got to here. I hope you found those stories interesting and I hope they've thrown some light on some of the bigger questions. We've seen primarily in this talk how Africans came to England in the households of royals or aristocrats but they did also come here in other ways through merchants trading directly to Africa as well as English privateers capturing Spanish and Portuguese ships on the high seas. But again that's another story.

I think we've also seen that they were performing a really wide range of roles in society and that they were accepted by the Church of England as equals in the eyes of God. And I think I've tried to touch on their legal status that the evidence shows that these Africans were actually living freely in Tudor England.

And I hope that's given you more of a perspective on some of the big debates today about immigration and racism, and you can see that we have a very long history of migrants coming to this country, and in some cases being welcomed and found creating lives for themselves. And I hope that that's something

we can continue and that understanding more about these early experiences will help us understand the history of racism in order to combat it today.

And I'm just going to go back into the screen for my last couple of slides to show you that there's obviously a lot more to read about the subject. I'm not the only scholar working in this area. I'd recommend looking at the work of Imtiaz Habib and Onyeka Nubia in particular for this period.

If you want to find out a lot more, I've created this FutureLearn course. It's free for anyone to take, it's aimed at people your age and anybody really. And you can see I've managed to work with this really great range of other historians and scholars, we're debating the big things, we're going into those primary sources and you can just learn so much more through that and I would really encourage you to check that out.

There are lots more resources here as you can see I've been working hard to create more teaching resources with teachers but I'm sure you can follow those up in your own time and all that's left for me to say is that I'm really looking forward to answering your questions at the live Q and A on Wednesday 6th October. I hope you've enjoyed my talk and I can't wait to hear what you think of it all.

Biography of the Speaker

Dr Kaufmann is a Senior Research Fellow at the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, part of the School of Advanced Study, University of London. She is also an Honorary Fellow of the University of Liverpool and a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society and has written extensively on the topic of diversity in Early Modern Britain. She has acted as a consultant for TV programmes including David Olusoga's BAFTA award-winning series "Black and British: A Forgotten History" and critically acclaimed prizewinning, "Black Tudors: The Untold Story" (Oneworld 2017), is now being developed into the drama series, 'Southwark', with BritBox.

Context of the event

Westminster Abbey's Learning Department hosted the online event "Africans in Tudor and Stuart Westminster" on 6th October 2021. Dr Miranda Kaufmann, author of "Black Tudors: The Untold Story" (2017), discussed the presence of Africans in Tudor and early Stuart Westminster in a pre-recorded lecture that students were able to watch and submit questions before the live event. Lou Cash, Learning Officer at Westminster Abbey chaired a live question and answer session with Dr Kaufmann, during which students' questions were answered.

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