

Celebrating Black Environmentalists

Black History Month

Rhiane Fatinikun

Rhiane Fatinikun is the award-winning founder of a charitable community group called Black Girls Hike. From exploring lush forests to abseiling and climbing in underground caves, Rhiane is tackling the lack of inclusion and representation in all outdoor spaces.

From starting her first hike in 2019, there are over 20 leaders across the UK registered with Black Girls Hike.

www.bghuk.com



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Dr Wangari Maathai - 1940-2011

Dr. Wangari Maathai was a Kenyan scholar and an internationally recognised environmental and human rights activist. In 1977, she founded the Green Belt Movement which introduced the idea of planting trees to help conserve the environment, not only to improve the local environment but improve the lives of the people living in it. It has planted over 51 million trees to date.

Wangari Maathai achieved more 'firsts' in her lifetime than most could ever hope for including being the first African Woman to receive the Nobel Peace Prize in 2004, the first person to receive the Nobel Peace prize in the name of environmental efforts, as well as being the first woman from East and Central Africa to receive a doctorate. In 2002, she was elected to the Kenyan parliament with an incredible 98% of the vote and served as the Assistant Minister for Environment, Natural Resources and Wildlife.



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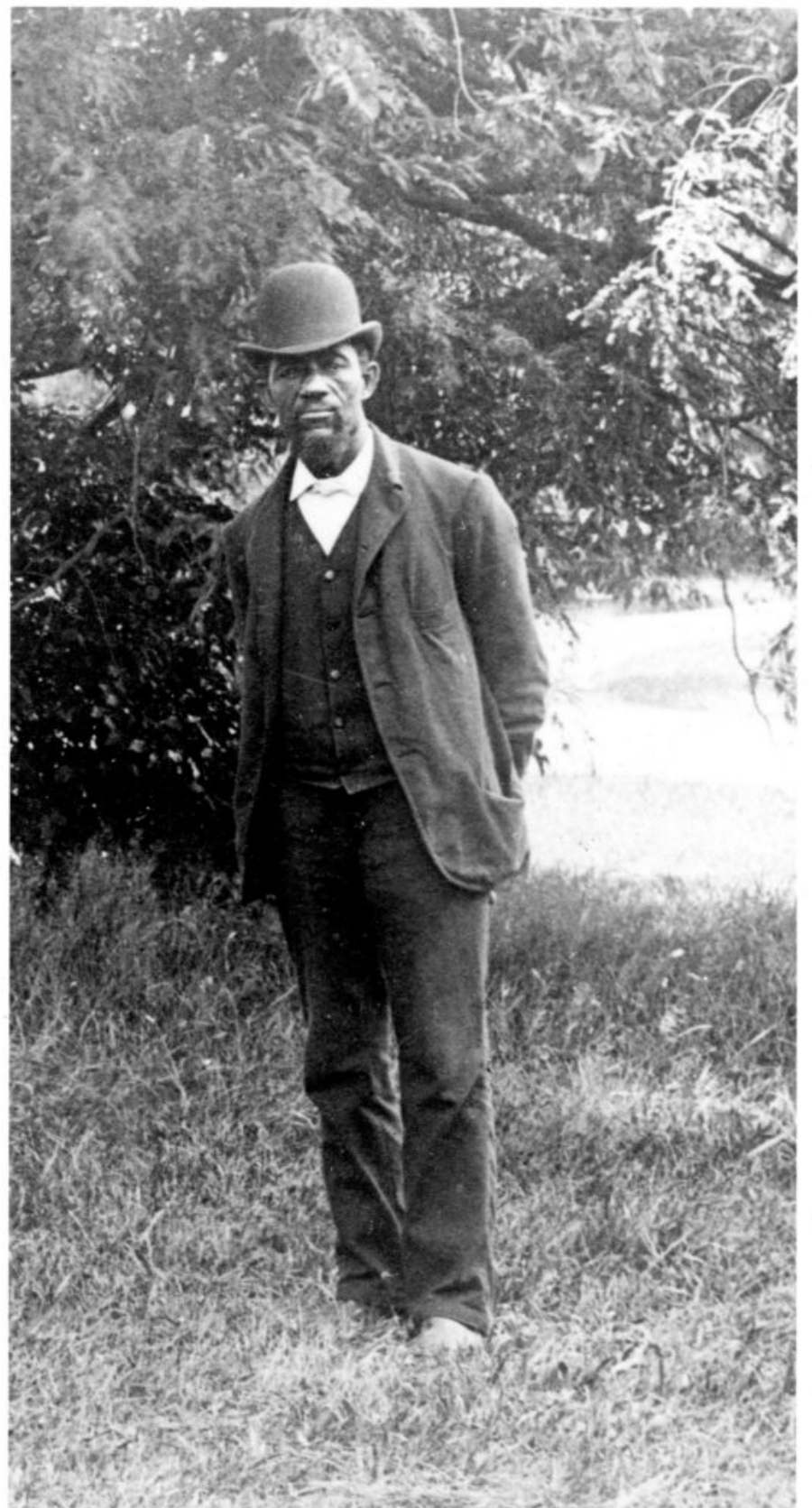
Solomon Brown - 1829-1906

Solomon Brown was the first African-American employee of the Smithsonian Institution. He served under three Smithsonian secretaries.

He rose in the ranks despite a lack of formal education, writing letters that help document the experience of a free Black man during the Civil War.

He educated himself on natural history and was the source of many illustrated maps and specimens, giving talks such as "The Social Habits of Insects."

He also wrote poetry and is remembered to this day on the grounds of the National Museum of Natural History in Washington, D.C., where several trees have been planted in his honor.



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Rue Mapp

Rue Mapp grew up in Northern California spending most of her time outside with her family kayaking, hiking and enjoying the lake. As she grew older, she realised how unique her upbringing was compared to other Black Americans and became inspired to change this.

In 2009, Mapp started a blog dedicated to connecting Black Americans to the outdoors. This blog quickly turned into a non-profit that is now operating nationally as Outdoor Afro. The organisation focuses on three key areas: Connecting Black People to the Outdoors, Reimagining Blackness in the Outdoors and Protecting the Outdoors.

They organise meet-up events, advocate for policy and funding changes, and amplify the voices of Black individuals in the outdoors space.

www.outdoorafro.com



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Francisca Rockey

Francisca Rockey was the only Black girl on her Geography uni course. In April 2023 she tweeted "I wish geography, environmental science and related subjects were more diverse. I'm the only black girl on my course and I know it's the same at other universities around the country."

It reached other Black geographers who felt similarly and so Rockey created Black Geographers; a space to build connections and networks between Black people studying and working in geography.

From one small tweet, an entire community has been brought together.

www.blackgeographers.com



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Wilfred Emmanuel-Jones MBE

Wilfred Emmanuel-Jones was born in Jamaica and moved to the UK during the Windrush era in the 1950's. He grew up in inner-city Birmingham, dreaming of escaping and becoming a landowner. Jones worked tirelessly and at the age of 40 he achieved his goal and bought a farm in Devon.

He is currently the only Black farmer in the UK, and to commemorate this achievement, he developed The Black Farmer brand, which was inspired by his passion and support for British agriculture.

www.theblackfarmer.com



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Ollie Olanipekun and Nadeem Perera

Ollie Olanipekun and Nadeem Perera founded Flock Together during the peak of the Covid-19 pandemic and global Black Lives Matter protests. Ollie is an award winning Creative Director and Nadeem is a wildlife TV presenter, author and activist.

Flock Together is a network of expert birders and enthusiastic first-timers that host monthly birdwatching walks for their growing community. They started here in London but have since expanded to Toronto, Tokyo and New York.

www.flocktogether.world



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George Washington Carver - 1864-1943

Born into enslavement, George Washington Carver became an important scientist, agricultural researcher and leader in educating farmers about crop rotation. He understood what few others at the time did: the basic interconnectedness between the health of the land and people.

He supported many of the concepts of modern environmentalism believing that we must take care of the earth and all its inhabitants. In his master's thesis, dated 1894, he wrote that "man must take the initiative in using nature to provide sustainable food systems that will help to alleviate hunger, encourage local participation and activism, and to safeguard and control our local food and water systems."

