



Eric Walrond and the Black Contribution to WW2 in Wiltshire

Amy Hammett- Community Curator for Wiltshire Museum

Jim Crow Laws

- Jim Crow- discriminative term for African-Americans
- 19th and 20th Century laws to enforce segregation in southern states of America
- Led to the “Great Migration”
- Institutions of civil rights were set up, e.g. National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in 1909
- Laws in place in the 1965
- Enforced in countries controlled by the USA too e.g. Panama



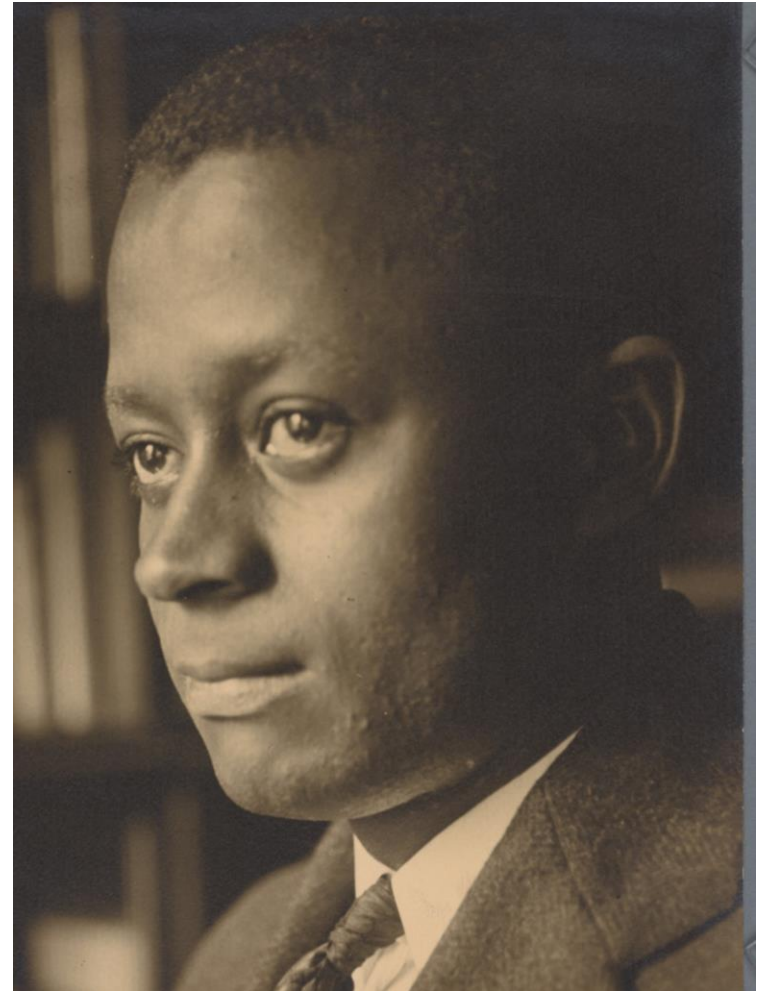
Harlem Renaissance



<https://youtu.be/9gboEyrj02g>

Eric Walrond

- Born in British Guyana to Caribbean parents
- Moved to Barbados, then to Panama
- Became a writer mainly focusing on issues of race, but also wrote a lot about Panama and the Caribbean
- Moved to Harlem and started writing for the New Negro
- Became an important part of the Harlem Renaissance
- Lived in Paris and London
- Moved to Wiltshire on outbreak of the war



Eric In Wiltshire

- Evacuates from London
- Lives at Ivy Terrace in Bradford upon Avon
- Only black man out of a population of 4000
- Still writing for magazines and journals in USA on race issues and the war, but this work eventually dries up
- Works at Melksham Rubber Factory during the war
- Admits himself to Roundway Hospital in Devizes for his mental health



WW2- Help from the USA desperately needed

- In groups, examine documents from the Home Office.
- What does the writer of your document think about the US segregation laws being put in place in the UK - do they support it?
- What do they think the British public will think of these laws?
- Why do you think this document was marked as top secret?

WW2- Help from the USA desperately needed

Discussing as a class the differing opinions of the government

- What do you think the UK Government decide to do?

African-American Soldiers arrive in UK

- Segregated camps
- Most people in Wiltshire hadn't seen a black person before
- Most locals preferred the African-American soldiers, rather than the white soldiers- they had better manners!



Dance Halls and Pubs

- White USA soldiers would often start fights with black soldiers as they didn't like sharing space with them
- Many locals would tell them to deal with it as segregation didn't happen in UK.
- Sometimes black men (whether American or Caribbean) were turned away from venues due to their race.
- Leisure time spent in separate towns or on different days of the week
- Quite a few ladies preferred to visit the dance halls where the African-American soldiers were, rather than the white troops.



Jamaican coloured Football Team played a Football Match against Chippenham on Saturday and were entertained afterwards.

“Brown” Babies

- Inter-racial relationships formed from these events
- This resulted in babies of mixed heritage (and they were born out of wedlock)
- African-American GI's not allowed to marry their sweethearts
- Some women were pressurised into giving their babies up
- The fathers' were not allowed to take the babies back to USA
- If the women kept their babies they were spat at, and struggled to find places to live and work





Thank you!