BLACK HISTORY MONTH NEWSLETTER

University of Leicester School of Physics and Astronomy
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Black in STEM: Spotlight on Fred Marang

Today, we're highlighting the work of Fred Marang, who has been a Telescope operator at the South African Astronomical Observatory (SAAO) for over 40 years.

Fred began his career in astronomy in 1978 as a Night Assistant after leaving his job at a television manufacturer. His first job was to operate the 1.9m telescope for visiting astronomers from all over the world. He showed such potential that it wasn't long before he was entrusted to independently carry out observing programmes on behalf of senior staff astronomers back in Cape Town. As a result, Fred has co-authored over 100 refereed

Photo credit: CNN

Today's donation link is The Black LGBTQIA+ Therapy Fund, a program set up to make therapy more accessible for Black LBGTQIA+ folk by funding therapy sessions. Donate here!

publications.

In 2005 the South African Large Telescope, SALT, which is the largest telescope in the southern hemisphere, was commissioned into service at SAAO. Fred became its first Telescope Operator, a much more complex and challenging proposition than the older, smaller telescopes he had commanded up until then.

Fred remains SALT's longest serving telescope operator, and a much respected, friendly, and familiar face at SAAO.

Fred's story in astronomy is all the more remarkable when you remember that he began his career at the height of the South African apartheid era. You can watch a short clip from CNN, celebrating Fred's 40 years of service at SAAO, here.

Photo credit: rsg.co.za

EVENTS TODAY

Why Black History Matters in a Decolonised Curriculum

On 12th October, join Robin Walker for a talk on how the presence (or absence) of Black History changes how we interpret the world. Booking info (and additional BHM events) available here.

RECOMMENDATIONS & RESOURCES

Book for younger readers: Look Up! by Nathan Bryon and illustrated by Dapo Adeola tells the story of a young girl who wants to be an astronaut just like her hero, Mae Jemison. Available at the Black-owned bookshops No Ordinary Bookshop and Black Star Books.

Book for older readers: Natives, by Akala, which confronts issues of race and class in Britain, and the history of our racialised empire. Available at the Black-owned bookshops New Beacon Books and Seven Oaks Bookshop.

Podcast: Witness History: Witness Black History, a podcast of bite-sized episodes which feature interviews with people who were there for, or who have close ties to, key moments in Black and civil rights history. Available through BBC Sounds and Spotify.

Livestream: I Need Diverse Games, a non-profit foundation founded by journalist and activist Tanya DePass, which seeks to bring projects, works and research by marginalized folks to light. Find them on Twitch, Twitter and Youtube.

Today's key figure from Black British history is Mary Seacole. Born in Kingston, Jamaica in 1805, Mary learnt about medicine and remedies from her mother, learning to treat Cholera whilst gaining a vast pathological knowledge about the disease. During the Crimean War, Mary volunteered her services but was numerously rejected, including by one of Florence Nightingale's Assistants, due to racial prejudices.

Undeterred, Mary and her brother, Edward, opened a hotel in Panama where she provided nursing services to the troops at the frontline. Mary's British Hotel served as a general store, restaurant, and hotel where she spent all profits to cover the costs of medicines she provided to poor soldiers.

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