

Re-Imagining Congo House/African Institute

Paintings Project

The **Re-Imagining Congo House/African Institute** project worked with people from North Wales and Central Africa to tell the story of Colwyn Bay's African Institute. The Institute opened in Colwyn Bay in 1889 by Rev. William Hughes and offered Black, primarily African, students training in various skills and trades. It closed in 1912. Many of these students went on to further study at British universities, returning to Africa as doctors, teachers, nurses and journalists.

Mfikela Jean Samuel is a Cameroonian North Wales-based artist. Supported by heritage consultant Dr Marian Gwyn and Rachel Evans from Conwy Museum Service, he led Year 8 pupils at Ysgol Bryn Elia to produce paintings exploring the story of the African Institute. The artworks were displayed at Colwyn Bay Library in 2024 alongside wooden clubs carried by students of the Institute on their journey to Colwyn Bay.

"I believe that this project has greatly enlightened the school children and everyone involved about an important part of the history of this region. As an individual and a Black man from West Africa, I am exhilarated to be part of this project and to discover that the history of people who look like me goes far back in time in and around Colwyn Bay and the wider county." – **Mfikela Jean Samuel**



Created 2023-2024, with contributions from Conwy Museum Service, Conwy Archives, Ysgol Bryn Elia, art teacher Aimee Jones, and artist Mfikela Jean Samuel.



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Bryn Elia



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