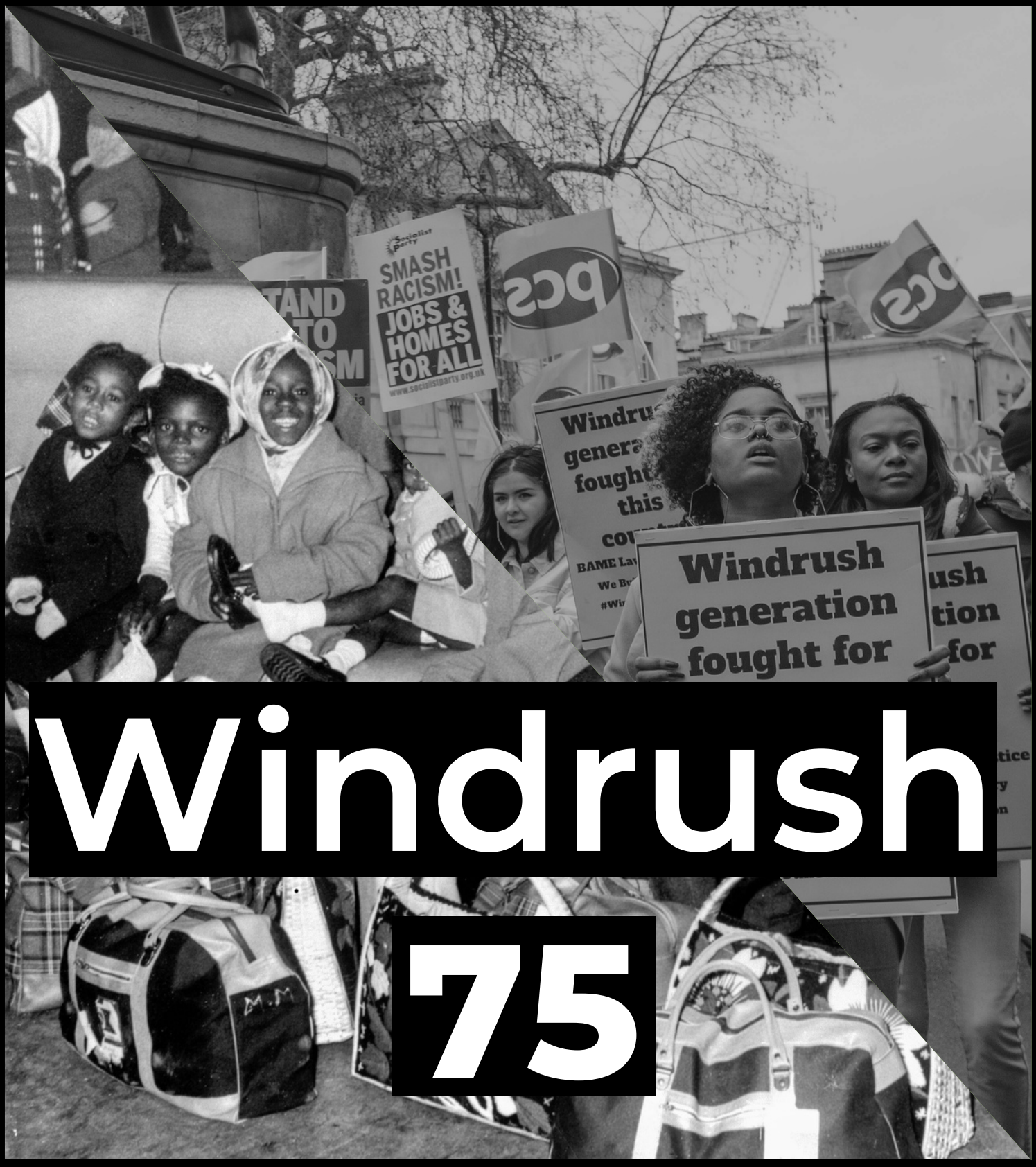
An e-book by The Conversation



Windrush 75

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THE CONVERSATION

We've only just begun … 75 years of Windrush

This moving collection tells the true tale behind a national mythology. In 75 remarkable years, the warm beating heart of the Caribbean melted the cold consciousness of post-war Britain. Though Britain had not bargained for it, the fateful arrival of these "dark strangers", including my father, on the HMT Empire Windrush in 1948 marked the transformation of its snowy white shores into a multicultural melting pot.

Enslaved Africans and Indian indentured labourers were brutally shipped to British West Indian plantations as human cargo 400 years ago. On the Windrush, these communities were shipped yet again, but this time, ironically, as paying passengers to rebuild the "Motherland". But it was no happy homecoming. As Maria del Pilar Kaladeen's powerful essay of family trauma on page 25 poignantly shows, the brutal legacy of double displacement left a trail of mental and physical pain in its wake.

The shocking racial injustice of the Windrush scandal features strongly in this collection. The government's wanton political scapegoating and persecution of some of their most vulnerable and loyal workers on a technicality of British nationality must not be brushed under the carpet on this anniversary of multicultural post-imperial redemption.

Carnival and jerk chicken, dub, reggae, and steel pan music and patois-infused Blinglish (the mix of British English and black youth slang) are inextricably black – and now, inextricably part of British culture. But juxtaposed to our significant achievements in the arts, academia, science and politics is the ugly truth of institutional racism.

Police brutality and judicial injustice, high rates of school exclusions, lower pay for equal work and disproportionate deaths in childbirth are a shameful inditement that racism is alive and well in modern Britain. Moreover, COVID exposed the scandal of poverty and poor health of Caribbean workers and revealed the shocking crisis of a disappearing, endangered black British Caribbean population.

The ageing Windrush generation is now passing away. While surviving a quarter of a century in a "hostile environment" with dignity, grace and honour is something to celebrate, it also marks a new era. A fourth generation of increasingly "mixed" young people of Caribbean heritage who are strident, confident, and creative now call Britain home. Seventy-five years on, we've only just begun to belong.

Heidi Safia Mirza
Emeritus Professor of Equalities Studies
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Credit: Bill Knight

THE CONVERSATION

About The Conversation

Access to expertise through high-quality journalism is key to a well-functioning democracy. As an independent source of news and analysis, The Conversation strives to improve the quality of public debate.

Our authors are academic experts working with professional journalists to write on subjects on which they have published research. Bringing this scholarly insight to current affairs, we provide trustworthy, evidence-based coverage on everything from public health and the climate crisis to politics, business and the arts. We strive to tell stories that matter, homing in on those that have been ill-explained or overlooked elsewhere.

The Conversation UK has a newsroom in London and editors based all over the country. But it is also part of a wider international editorial network. We are as local as we are global.

We believe in open access to ideas, knowledge and information. The Conversation is free to read, share and republish under Creative Commons licensing. Our content is thus an indispensable resource for the media, routinely picked up by outlets the world over.

We are funded by our university partners, UKRI, Research England and other higher education and research funding bodies and thrive with the generous support of our donors.

About the National Windrush Museum

The mission of the National Windrush Museum is to foster a greater understanding of the experiences of Windrush communities, their stories, and their profound impact on Britain. The National Windrush Museum is dedicated to researching, exhibiting, publishing, and preserving the tangible and intangible cultural heritage of the Windrush generation, as well as their antecedents and successors.
We are committed to collaboration, diversity, and inclusivity, ensuring our work reaches a wide audience and has a lasting impact.

We are delighted to partner with The Conversation. It is crucial to preserve the written word, and we wholeheartedly congratulate and support The Conversation in their unwavering goal of encouraging research and promoting excellence through academic conversations, curiosity, investigative journalism, and plain-speaking about relevant issues. Therefore, we are excited about this collaboration to research, promote, and publish articles about the Windrush generation and wider cultural diversity, with a particular focus on black heritage and culture.

Les Johnson, founder and chair of the National Windrush Museum

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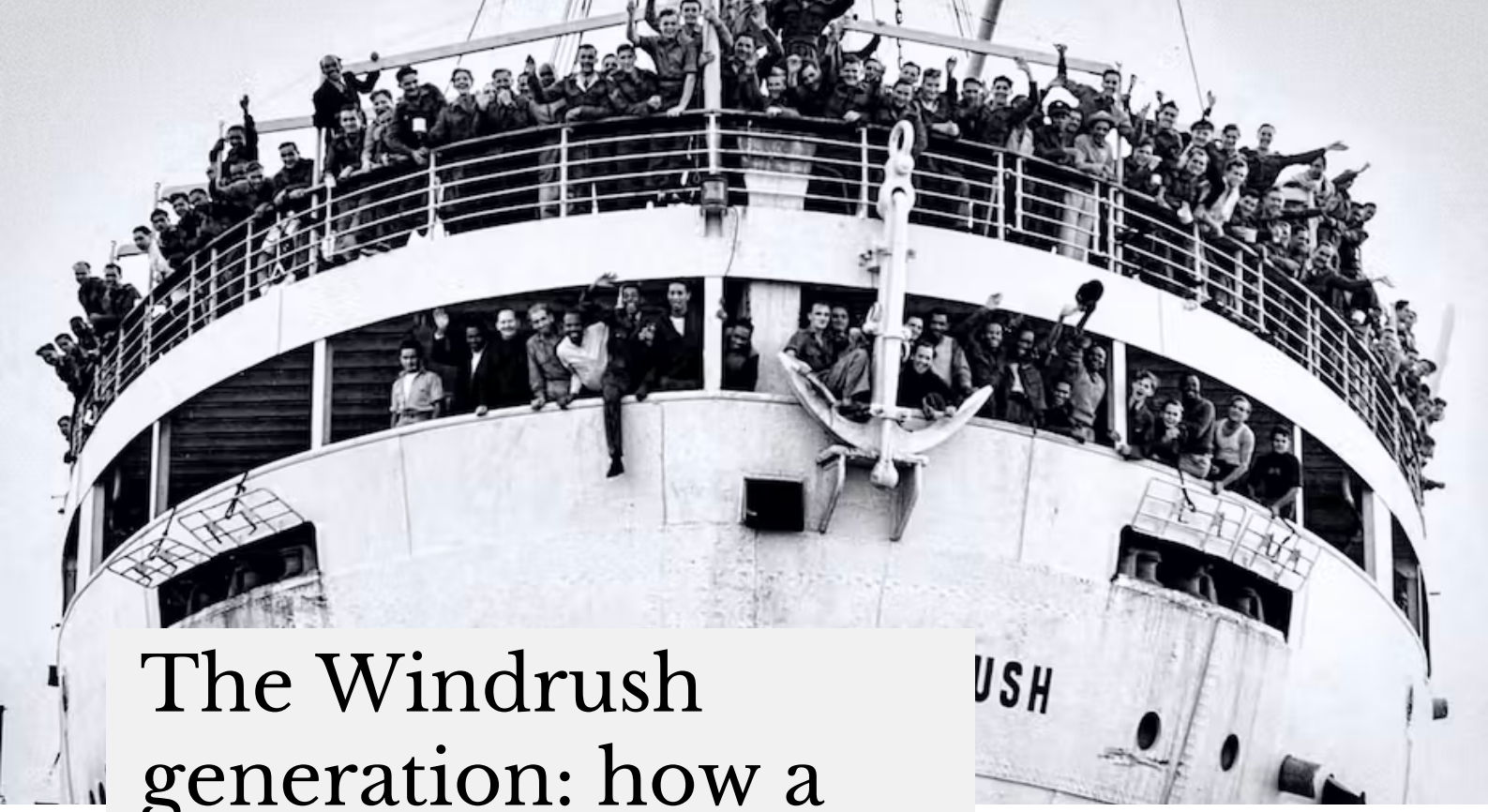


Image credit: Contraband Collection / Alamy

The Windrush generation: how a resilient Caribbean community made a lasting contribution to British society

The Windrush generation has a long and storied history encompassing empire, war, migration, multiculturalism, racism and scandal – a history that has transformed British society and culture.



Les Johnson

Visiting Research Fellow, Birmingham School of Media, Birmingham City University

As a young boy in 1962, I remember arriving in England from Jamaica on a BOAC jet plane. It seemed to me like I was going to the moon – the air hostess who accompanied me was the first white person I had ever seen. My father greeted me eagerly at London's Paddington station, amid the swirling smoke of steam trains. It had been two years since we last met, but I recognised him immediately.

Fourteen years earlier, the arrival of the Empire Windrush at London's Tilbury docks in 1948 was a pivotal moment in British history, marking the beginning of a significant wave of migration from the Caribbean. This became known as the Windrush generation, and signified a new chapter in the history of the United Kingdom. Since then it has assumed a symbolic status, commemorated annually on Windrush Day, observed on 22 June.

This turning point reformed Anglo-Caribbean identities as the Windrush generation settled in Britain, leaving their mark on history, society and culture. The arrivals serve as a poignant

reminder of the dynamic and fluid nature of migration, identity and societal transformation. But how did this momentous event come about, and what were the factors that led to the settlement of these British citizens?

These questions are important because Windrush history is not included in the UK school curriculum, resulting in an incomplete view of Britain's history of cultural diversity. Race equality think tank, the Runnymede Trust, has described the Windrush story as "an integral part of British history".

While there are now numerous celebratory events and commemorations on or around Windrush Day, once the festivities end, there is little permanence. There are no major collections or permanent Windrush exhibitions. There has been no museum dedicated to its history with the significance of other major British museums. And there is no major institution for children to view the legacies of the Windrush generation and their impact on Britain. These are just some of the reasons I recently founded the National Windrush Museum.

Coming to Britain

The British invitation to Caribbeans to come to Britain after the second world war can be traced back to the British Nationality Act of 1948. This conferred British citizenship and the right to settle in the UK on all people from the British colonies to help rebuild the country. The Windrush generation refers to the people who migrated from Caribbean countries to the United Kingdom between 1948 and 1971. However, Caribbean immigration did not cease after this period, and migrants have settled ever since, influencing Britain's demographic composition. Major urban centres like London, Birmingham, Manchester, Bristol, Liverpool, Leeds and Preston became focal points for these communities, where they established vibrant neighbourhoods and thriving cultural institutions, contributing to the overall diversity and multicultural fabric of these cities.

Despite the open invitation, the reception the Windrush pioneers received was often hostile. Caribbean migrants were (and still are) subjected to poor housing conditions, with accommodation in hostels often overcrowded and lacking basic amenities. In 1948, an underground shelter in Clapham South tube station was used as temporary housing for people from the Caribbean.

The types of employment available to the Windrush generation were often limited to low-paying jobs such as cleaning, factory work and driving. Created the same year in 1948, the National Health Service (NHS) has been an important source of employment for members of the Windrush community since its inception.

Many Caribbean migrants found work in hospitals, nursing homes and other healthcare facilities, playing a crucial role in the development and functioning of the NHS. They contributed their skills, dedication and expertise, helping to shape and improve healthcare provision in the UK.

Some devised ingenious self-help micro-financing schemes such as the "partners" initiative, where small groups banded together and shared from the combined pot of money weekly. This is how many of the Windrush generation afforded air fares to send for their families – and how my parents were able

to send for me.

The institutional racism and poor conditions endured by the Windrush generation led to people starting their own businesses: barbers and hairdressers, fashion and design, restaurants and cook shops, a variety of trades, market stalls, independent black churches and dancehall music. These businesses were important not just in generating a living, but also in developing flourishing communities and creating black British culture.

In addition to their contribution to the workforce, the Windrush generation and their descendants have made a significant social and cultural impact on British society. They brought with them their Caribbean culture, art, sports, traditions, and customs, enriching the cultural landscape of the United Kingdom. From food and music to fashion, literature, language, and even cricket, Caribbean influences became ingrained in British popular culture, fostering a sense of diversity and multiculturalism.

The Windrush pioneers

Sam King MBE was one of the notable figures of the Windrush generation who played a significant role in the establishment of the annual Windrush Day on 22 June. Born in Jamaica in 1926, he served in the British Army during the second world war before coming to Britain in 1948. King went on to become the first black mayor of Southwark in London, and was involved in a number of community projects and organisations.

Other important Windrush figures include Claudia Jones, a political and pioneering journalist; Stuart Hall, a cultural theorist and political activist; Bill Morris, a trade union leader who became the first black general secretary of the Transport and General Workers' Union; Diane Abbott, who became the first black woman to be elected to the British parliament; and Bernie Grant, who also served as a MP and was a prominent campaigner for racial equality and social justice.

Hall was a Jamaican-born British cultural theorist who played a significant role in shaping our understanding of race, identity and culture. Hall argued that identity is not fixed, but rather is constructed through social and cultural practices. He also emphasised the role of power and control in shaping culture.

In the context of the Windrush generation, Hall's theories are particularly relevant, as they help us to understand the ways in which Caribbean migrants and in particular the Windrush generation identities were constructed and represented in British culture.

The Windrush scandal

One of the most shameful episodes in this history is the Windrush scandal, which saw people who had lived in the UK for decades – including some who had friends who arrived on the Windrush – being wrongly deported or denied access to public services like the NHS.

This British government scandal came to light in 2017, when British citizens of Caribbean descent who had migrated to the UK between 1948 and 1971 were wrongly classified as illegal immigrants. They then faced deportation, detention and some even lost their homes and livelihoods. This gross injustice has affected many lives, highlighting the systemic racism that exists in Britain. Its impact is still being felt today.
The Black Lives Matter movement has been instrumental in bringing attention

to these issues, and its importance in highlighting the systemic racism in Britain cannot be overstated. The toppling of statues of figures linked to the slave trade and colonialism, such as Edward Colston in Bristol and Robert Milligan in London, sparked a wider conversation about decolonisation at all levels of society and the need to confront Britain's colonial past.

The National Windrush Museum

According to the Museums Association there are about 2,500 museums in Britain. Yet there is no black culture museum or established school curriculum that focuses on the heritage of the Windrush generation. In 2021 I founded the National Windrush Museum which I chair. The museum plays an important role in collecting, researching, documenting and exhibiting artefacts and stories about the Windrush generation and those who came before and after them.

The museum provides a vital link to the past and a gateway to the future, enabling us to understand and appreciate the contributions of the Windrush generation to Britain. It will also serve as a valuable resource for schools and universities, providing an opportunity for collaboration in the development of curricula, research and study centres and libraries around the world.

Many stories and hidden narratives of the Windrush generation need to be unearthed, told and preserved. As part of the second wave of Windrush settlers and as an academic researcher who innovated the concept of cultural visualisation, this is important work. Cultural visualisation involves the visual research, portrayal and analysis of various aspects of culture, including music, film, fashion, visual arts, dance, literature and more.

My work looks at "doing culture differently" and I wanted this new venture to adopt the idea of "doing museums differently". The National Windrush Museum provides a life laboratory in which to explore and develop this concept, which I hope will have a significant cultural impact on the heritage sector.

The 75th anniversary of the Windrush generation is a poignant opportunity to shed light on a momentous event in British history so often neglected in our schools. This milestone marks a transformative chapter that reshaped Britain's fabric and ushered in a vibrant new culture.

The founding of the National Windrush Museum stands as a vital, moving and significant historical moment. By documenting, exhibiting and explaining the enduring legacies of the Windrush generation, the museum becomes a powerful testament to their contributions. Its ethos fills a crucial gap in our understanding of Britain's history, ensuring that these stories are preserved and celebrated as integral parts of our national narrative.



Image credit:
Steve Taylor ARPS/Alamy

‘We need to be acknowledged’: how Caribbean elders navigate belonging in the UK

People's sense of belonging is fostered in everyday social practices and in the spaces they claim for themselves. Our elders need to be acknowledged, respected and accepted.



Roiyah Saltus

Professor of Sociology,
University of South Wales

We all belong somewhere. And wherever we are, people either see us as belonging, or they don’t. In the UK, this has been made only too clear in the last decade by the government’s anti-migration policy, known as the hostile environment, instituted when Theresa May was Home Secretary between 2010 and 2016.

This controversial government stance is underpinned by overt racism and hostility. It triggered the Windrush scandal, which, from 2017, saw people of retirement age – many of whom had lived as British people in the UK since early childhood – denied citizenship and residency rights, and the attendant healthcare, housing and wider social support.

The scandal is emblematic of what many Caribbean elders have faced throughout their lives in the UK – the discrimination and poor outcomes they have experienced in terms of employment, criminal justice, housing, education, health and social welfare. The question “Where are you from?”, an all-too-familiar and enduring trope, encapsulates a narrative of non-belonging.

Spending time together

We derive our sense of belonging from being recognised and accepted as being connected with – rightly placed in – a specific environment. Irrespective of dominant narratives to the contrary, people and communities in Britain have

always found ways to foster connection and belonging.

For the last decade I have explored ideas of place-making and community-based knowledge through studies with older people of Caribbean descent in Britain. I have captured the ways they have found to belong in a place in which many have lived for decades, and in which they will die. I have found that, in migrant and diasporic communities, in particular, belonging is fostered in what sociologists term the "microsocial": the everyday practices and rituals, as well as in the spaces people claim for themselves.

For older church-going women who arrived in the UK during the Windrush era, luncheon clubs often played an important role in their lives. As Mrs Faith, a woman in her early 70s, told me during an interview in 2011:

> **"We used to meet regularly, and it was nice … we had lunch, usually had a guest speaker and then just spent time with each other. It's how we take care of each other – and, where we come from, taking care of each other is what we had to do."**

For her, the club not only created bonds between members but was also a caring, diasporic space. Participants came to find a sense of kinship and connection in shared values and "ways of knowing", drawn from their countries of birth.

Domino clubs elicited similar sentiments. One that I visited was established over 30 years ago. Members meet twice a week to play dominoes. They also take part in the annual tournament with five or six other small clubs from around the country. One 71-year-old member said:

> **"It's time for us … we take over here … some people come to play dominoes and are serious about it; others come to have a laugh and a talk … to make sure we are all right. That's what it all about. We can relax, talk about old times and back home … and check on each other."**

Carving out one's own space

Togetherness is not the only route to belonging. In another study, I looked at the leisure activities of Caribbean people over 85 years of age. One man I spoke to, Mr Bridgeman, was born on a small holding in Barbados 90 years ago. He remains connected to the land – albeit land meted out by his local council in the UK – through an allotment, to which he has tended, daily, for nearly half a century.

When I checked on Mr Bridgeman during the pandemic he was continuing with his daily routine, drawing on the old ways. His allotment remained his refuge, a place in which to grow vegetables like he did as a boy – and, importantly, to just "be".

I have found that these elders very seldom rage against injustice. There has been, in the main, a quiet resistance to generational hostility and to being made to feel like they did not belong.

The strongest response I have received was from a Mrs Jeffers who, in answer to a question on the importance of

conducting research rooted in the lives of her generation, said:

> **Older people from the Caribbean need to be asked. We have played a valuable role in the development of British society and our views and experiences should be sought; we need to be acknowledged, respected and accepted.**

The pandemic has taken its toll. Of the many spaces frequented by the Caribbean elders with whom I have spent the last decade, the luncheon club no longer exists, the domino club has lost significant members and Mr Bridgeman cannot get to his allotment as often as he once did.

Sociologists including the US writer bell hooks have called for the need for "epistemic levelling". The idea is that in order for social policy and service delivery to be effective, it needs to be grounded not in the theoretical but in the parochial – in the knowledge that emerges from people's everyday lives. This is especially the case for racialised communities, whose own knowledge production is so often ignored.

Many of the elders I have worked with are nearing the final chapters of their lives in the UK. Understanding both the strategies they have put in place to carve out their own spaces and sense of connectivity, and the very real fears they have too, remains pressing. We need to amplify their voices, and pay attention to what they have to say.



Bridgette Toussaint

“When I went to work at Plumbs (upholsterers), I remember one woman said to me: ‘Bridgette, I don’t understand, why did you leave your nice place and come here? Why do you have to come to steal our jobs?’ But then she became my friend. That’s it. All you have to do is just calm down. She ended up being my best friend!



How the Windrush generation transformed music in Britain

The arrival of Windrush brought new forms of music to Britain.

Image credit: Homer Sykes/ Alamy Stock Photo



Kenny Monrose

Researcher, Department of Sociology, University of Cambridge

There was a black musical presence in Britain many centuries before the arrival of the HMT Empire Windrush at London's Tilbury dock.

In the Tudor period, it was fashionable for wealthy households to employ and enjoy black musicians, particularly within the royal courts. The most well known were royal trumpeter John Blanke and violinist Joseph Emidy.

During subsequent centuries spanning the Tudor, Stuart, Georgian and Victorian periods, there were many prolific black musicians in Britain. Composers George Bridgetower, Samuel Coleridge-Taylor and Ignatius Sancho were well known. But there were also many street musicians, known in the 1800s as "negro melodists" and touring vaudeville performers, who were described by social historian Henry Mayhew in his writings on the London working class.

With Windrush, however, came new forms of music, which were emerging from the music scene across the Atlantic. A dockside performance of London Is The Place For Me by Trinidad's top calypsonian, Lord Kitchener, emphasised the commitment that Windrush arrivals had with the empire through its reference to Britain as the "mother country".

As well as Lord Kitchener, on board the ship were several well-known musicians. Singer and actress Mona Baptiste arrived from Trinidad with fellow

calypsonian compatriots Lord Beginner and the too-often-forgotten Lord Woodbine.

After settling in Liverpool, Woodbine became a singer-songwriter, promoter and uncontracted manager for a short-lived band named The Silver Beetles, featuring two young lads named Paul McCartney and John Lennon.

The Windrush arrivals generally found it difficult to gather in established municipal spaces. Clubs and public houses legally operated colour bars (which prohibited non-white patrons) well into the 1960s.

As a result, West Indians were forced to create their own alternative spaces for leisure. Churches, shebeens (illegal drinking establishments) or Blues parties were developed as spaces that were open to all local community members.

It wasn't unusual to find Irish women in West Indian shebeens, as by the end of the 1950s considerable camaraderie existed between these two sets of often-despised arrivals.

These venues were turned into profitable business ventures that highlighted the cultural and communal significance of the newly arrived sound systems (powerful mobile speakers used to play music at events such as street parties and the collective of deejays, engineers and MCs that run them) in Britain.

Rise of the sound system

Sound systems transformed the way music was played and listened to in Britain. Thanks to soundmen (those who own or manage a sound system) such as Count Suckle, Duke Vin, Lloyd Coxsone and the recently deceased Jah Shaka, sounds became an important cultural possession for Black people. They were one of the few manufactured commodities that were used to celebrate the aesthetics and creativity of black culture.

In Narratives from Beyond the UK Reggae Bassline, sociologist Les Back explains:

> **"Since the mid-1970s, the name Jah Shaka has become synonymous with Rastafarian roots music, dubwise and Marcus Garvey's black consciousness … Shaka sound system was a vital part of London black life."**

Despite the rising tide of racism during this time, the music played on sound systems began to gather patronage from both black and white youth subcultures.

In response to racist comments made by guitarist Eric Clapton at a concert in Birmingham in 1976, photographer Red Saunders and designer Roger Huddle organised the Rock Against Racism movement, which ran from 1976 to 1981.

Major record labels seized the opportunity to capitalise on the emerging marketability of reggae music and prompted moguls such as Richard Branson to form subsidiary record labels geared toward the genre.

As producer Lloyd Coxsone said in a personal conversation with me:

> **"Reggae has its roots in Jamaica but the business end of the music was in England."**

Sound systems were also pivotal in honing black British talent. They led

artists such as Tippa Irie, Smiley Culture and Maxi Priest to become household names once their material charted.

As sociologist Lez Henry explains:

> **“Black youths in Britain, by way of the Deejay performance (via sound systems), created a living history that challenged their negative depiction.”**

Former soundman Dennis Bovell agrees and suggests that the post-Windrush generation during the 1980s grew West Indian music into something distinctively British, seen in music such as Lovers Rock for example.

A similar trend occurred with other subgenres, such as mod/boss reggae and two-tone in the 1970s and 1980s. It continued into the 1990s with the emergence of dubstep, jungle and more in recent times, grime.

In her book, Terraformed: Young Black Lives in the Inner City, urban music researcher Joy White explains:

> **“Grime’s sonic origins flow through the musical practice of the black diaspora, namely hip-hop, reggae (particularly dancehall) jungle and UK garage, whilst Jamaican and UK sound system culture and practice also had a significant influence.”**

A further example of this is the impact of migrants from Africa, who have skilfully fused music from the continent into new and distinctive hybrids of black music such as Afro-beat and Afro-swing, which have become exceedingly popular in Britain.

The Windrush arrival transformed music in Britain, either by way of the savvy and sophisticated social commentary provided by calypsonians with their steel bands, or the sound systems and their deejays.

Their input assisted the development of the fertile British music scene of today and positively enhanced the cadence, rhythm and tempo of British culture.



Courtesy of Michael McMillan/Huntley Archives at London Metropolitan Archives

The Black-owned publishing houses that shaped the Windrush generation



Jack Webb

Lecturer in Modern British History, University of Manchester

Black-owned publishing houses, which first found life in community newsletters, played an important role in shaping Black British identity.

The story of Britain's Black publishers is one of endurance and monumental creativity in the face of repeated attempts at persecution and denigration.

Luminaries such as the authors and intellectuals C.L.R. James and George Padmore had been educated in some of the Caribbean's elite colonial schools. There, they were subject to a formal education of respect for English culture and, above all, the monarchy.

Yet as they travelled to Britain in the 1930s, these writers and activists went on to author and publish fervent critiques of the imperial system in which they had been raised. They were followed by scores of students and workers throughout the 1950s – the so-called Windrush generation – like the publishers Eric and Jessica Huntley who, although often subject to that same imperial education, continued in this tradition of anti-colonialism.

Many of these Caribbean migrants settled in the same locations to establish nascent Black communities and neighbourhoods around the country, including Paddington and Haringey in London, Handsworth in Birmingham, and Tiger Bay in Cardiff. Through neighbourhood newsletters, new arrivals learned how to navigate Britain's seemingly hostile environment.

The practice of self-publishing had long

been undertaken in the Caribbean islands, often acting as a mouthpiece for debating societies. In Paddington, a community-produced newsletter informed Black newcomers of the shops, clubs and bars in the area that were most welcoming.

Like much Black-produced ephemera throughout the 20th century in both Britain and the Caribbean, this newsletter would have been put together in local cafes, newsagents and living rooms by pen and typewriter, then printed on hand-mechanised Gestetner machines before being made available in the local district.

This was an introverted, communal process in which readers and writers were often one and the same. Through such newsletters, a keen and distinct cultural and political Black identity was cultivated.

From activists to publishers

Out of this long Caribbean tradition of do-it-yourself publishing, two publishers emerged to change the face of the nascent Black British publishing scene.

The bookshops-turned-publishing houses, New Beacon (est. 1966) and Bogle-L'Ouverture (est. 1969), offered Black writers the opportunity to publish lengthier works of literature and scholarship.

In many respects, the reasons for establishing Black publishers were made urgent due to the rejection of Caribbean people and their culture in Britain. They were subject to police harassment in the form of the Sus laws, which allowed police to arrest any "suspected person". Their children were systematically marginalised in their education. And cultural venues like the Bogle-L'Ouverture bookshop were firebombed by far-right racists. There was a simmering feeling of persecution and rejection from the British nation among the Caribbean diaspora.

Between them, Bogle-L'Ouverture and New Beacon printed forceful critiques of the British colonial system and the insidious everyday experiences of racism in Britain. Works such as Walter Rodney's How Europe Underdeveloped Africa (1972, Bogle-L'Ouverture) and Bernard Coard's How the Caribbean Child Was Made Educationally Subnormal (1971, New Beacon) remain cornerstone reading for scholars of Black studies and Black British history.

In this commitment to promoting the Black cultural scene, John La Rose (who established New Beacon) created the Caribbean Artists Movement in 1966. This forum spearheaded the work of literary critics, poets, scholars and artists such as Aubrey Williams, Kamau Brathwaite and Linton Kwesi Johnson.

Likewise, Eric and Jessica Huntley at Bogle-L'Ouverture hosted talks by compelling and dynamic Blackspeakers and thinkers such as Angela Davis and Valerie Bloom.

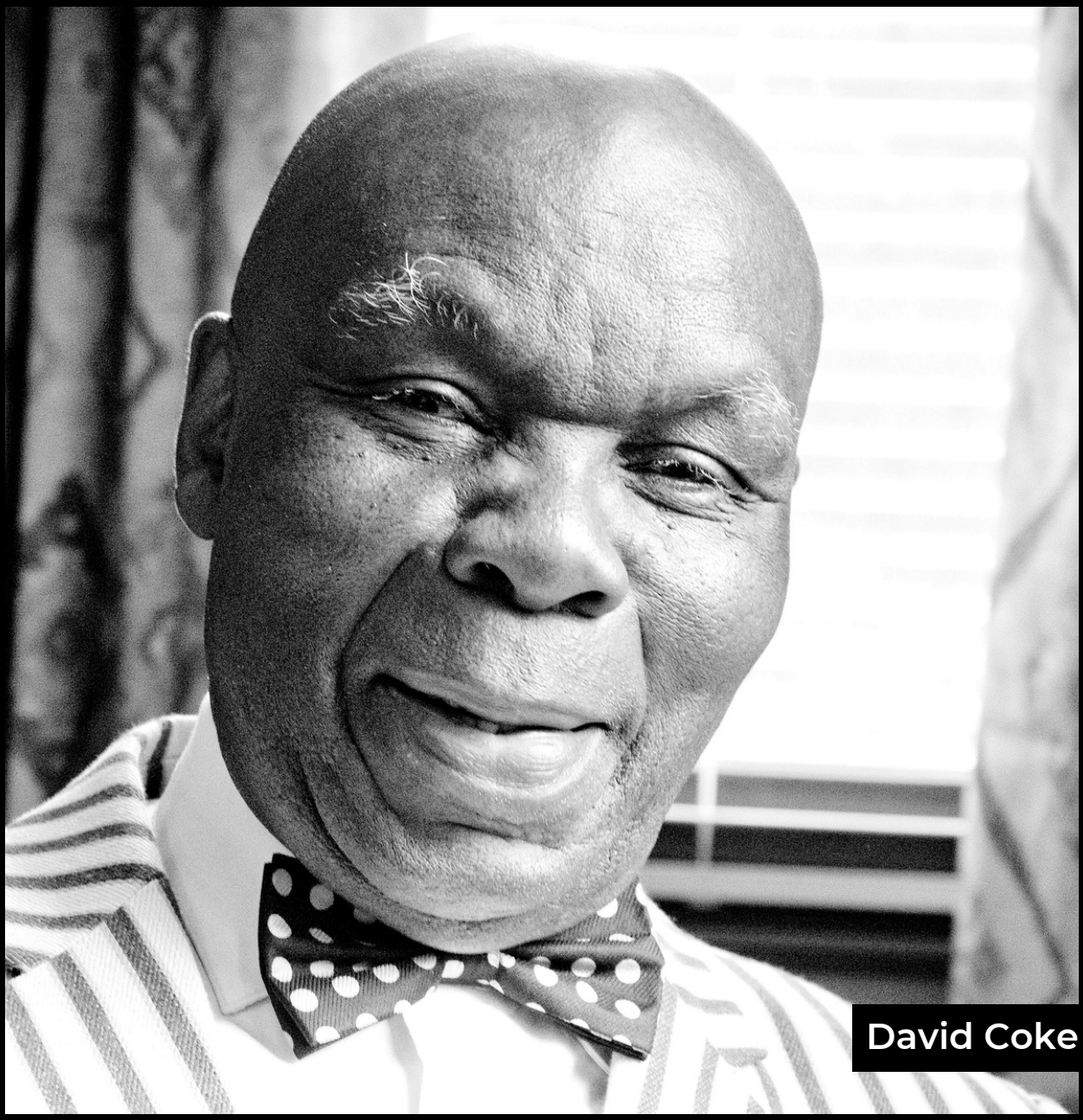
These publishers were rooted in the communities they served, augmenting and fostering a sense of Blackness as an artistic expression as well as a political force, rather than as being a marker of any sort of racial inferiority. Through their work, they encouraged pride in Caribbean, African and, at times, south Asian culture.

Although wholly self-reliant and deeply

interpersonal like the smaller initiatives that preceded them, these publishers ushered in a new era of pan-African and Black British identity.
They catered to an emerging national market of Black and British readers who desired to understand better their own plight in the “Motherland”. And as these readers often sent works back to east and west Africa, north America and the Caribbean, they became nodal points in an international network of intellectuals and writers.

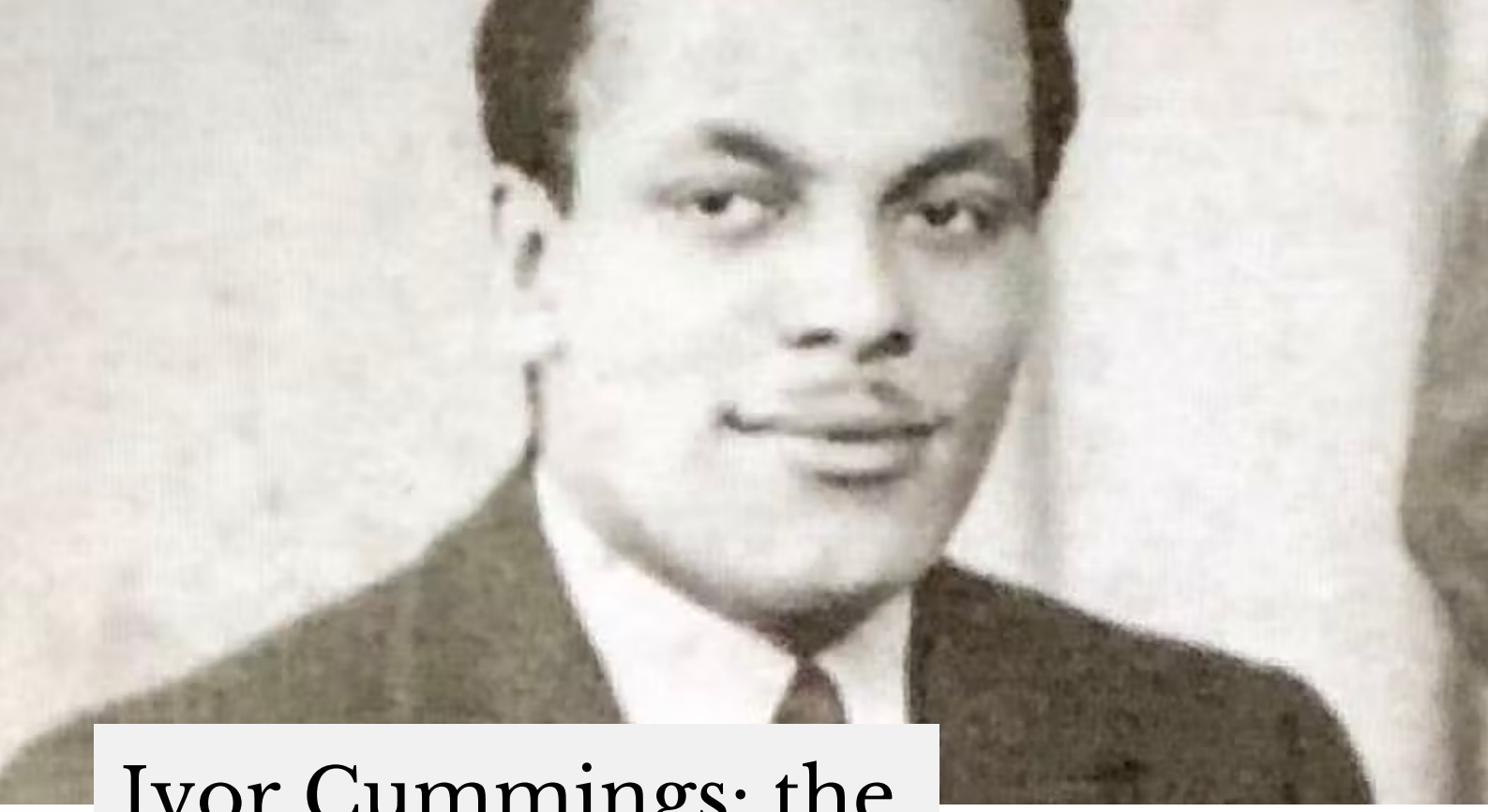
Although these publishers were by no means the only players in this multifaceted history, they are a burning example of the people of the Windrush, who not only persevered through a hostile environment but generated new cultural and artistic expressions.

The burgeoning different Black artforms in this era laid the foundation for the explosion of Black media – and the proliferation of the self-assured Black British identity – that emerged on screens, radio and in print from the 1990s onwards.



David Coke

> I have become so acquainted with the lifestyle I have in England ... I like the discipline here. I love the organisation. I know if I've got an appointment at eight o'clock, it's eight o'clock – not ten minutes past eight as it is in Jamaica. It's not perfect here and there's a lot of terrible things happening in government. But as bad as it is, it's better than where I come from.



Ivor Cummings: the forgotten gay mentor of the Windrush generation

An openly gay, black man was the representative of the crown who greeted Windrush arrivals.

Image credit: Author provided (no reuse)



Nicholas Boston

Associate Professor of Media Sociology, Lehman College, CUNY

The most familiar version of the story of the Windrush generation excludes LGBTQ+ people. It describes how (presumed) heterosexual men from the Caribbean, seeking economic opportunity, arrived and later spawned – literally and figuratively – the generation of black Britons to follow.
Joy is not just a mere fleeting emotion – it triggers a host of significant physiological and psychological changes that can improve our physical and mental health. And, luckily for us, there are many easy things we can do each day in order to boost the amount we feel.

But that narrative leaves out an important figure: Ivor Gustavus Cummings. His influence and dedication made him the true spawner of the Windrush generation. And Cummings was an openly gay man.

Whitehall was informed of the imminent arrival of several hundred settlers aboard the HMT Empire Windrush via a telegram from the governor of Jamaica, 13 days before the ship set sail.

This telegram was routed to the welfare department of the Colonial Office (the

government department that oversaw the colonies of the British Empire). There it became the responsibility of the second most senior officer – 35-year-old Ivor Cummings.

Cummings replied with detailed instructions:

> **“Although we shall do what we can for these fellows, the main problem is the complete lack of accommodation and being unable to put in hand any satisfactory reception arrangements.”**

A paper trail of telegrams, letters, reports and addresses – both typed and handwritten – documents Cummings’ dogged efforts to secure accommodations and resources for the “Windrushers” on a time crunch.

How Cummings prepared for arrivals

As the ship crossed the Atlantic, Cummings feverishly pieced together arrangements for the travellers’ reception. He was the point person, coordinating among multiple departments of the civil service and officials in England, Jamaica and on the high seas.

It was Cummings who, after all other options were exhausted, negotiated the use of a former[air raid shelter beneath Clapham Common for those in need of lodging.

This choice of location led to nearby Brixton becoming a destination for other African-Caribbean newcomers and the rise of one of the most iconic black neighbourhoods in Britain.

When, on June 21, the ship dropped anchor at London’s Tilbury docks, it was Cummings who boarded the ship and greeted the hopeful migrants.

“First of all,” he said in his magisterial tone of voice (a 1974 BBC documentary, The Black Man in Britain, features interviews with Cummings), “let me welcome you to Great Britain and express the hope that you will all achieve the objects that brought you here.”

Who was Ivor Cummings?

Cummings was born in West Hartlepool, England, in 1913, to a white English mother and Sierra Leonean father. His paternal line was distinguished – composer Samuel Coleridge-Taylor was a cousin.

Another relative was Constance Cummings-John, a women’s rights advocate who served as mayor of Freetown, Sierra Leone. A historic first for an African woman.

Growing up in Croydon with his mother, Cummings was usually the only non-white person in his environment. This experience shaped his conviction to “help any person of colour”, according to the author of his obituary, Val Wilmer, who interviewed him once in his home and once at his bedside in hospital.

Cummings also mentored people who shared his other minority status – homosexuality. He lived openly and uncensored long before the Sexual Offences Act of 1967 decriminalised homosexuality in England and Wales.

One of the more prominent queer men

Cummings supported was Paul Danquah. The mixed heritage actor-turned-lawyer was the son of J.B. Danquah, a founding statesman of independent Ghana.

Paul's father had been absent from his childhood. In a speech Paul sent to be read at Cummings' memorial service, he said that Ivor advised: "You must not disparage your father. Your father is a very important person and you have this heritage." In the same speech, Danquah praised Cummings' "regard for matters of style and rank".

"He liked reprobates," Wilmer said. "He liked highfalutin people, but although he had this superior way about him and talked in that manner, he was actually quite humble."

In his book, Black London, historian Marc Matera points to the rumour in the postwar period of a "homosexual clique" in the Colonial Office.

The welfare department chief, John L. Keith (a white Briton) was gay, for example. It was said any heterosexual man needed to be in their graces to "get ahead". Cummings wasn't fazed by

"He was a fastidious, elegant man, with a manner reminiscent of Noel Coward," according to authors Mike and Trevor Phillips. "He chain-smoked, using a long cigarette holder and addressed visitors as: 'dear boy'."

Cummings' later life

Cummings resigned from the Colonial Office in 1958. He'd been offered a high-ranking post in the Colonial Service in Trinidad. However, he decided instead to accept an offer from Kwame Nkrumah (president of the newly independent nation of Ghana) to train diplomats for foreign service. He succumbed to cancer on October 17 1992, just shy of his 80th birthday.

Were there other gay or bisexual men among the Windrush passengers that Cummings helped? We don't yet know. Scholars have only recently begun to research queerness in relation to the Windrush era.

As a Guardian article about the Windrush settlers that ran the day after they had disembarked, asserted:

> **"They are … as heterodox a collection of humanity as one might find."**



Image credit:The Field Museum Library, CC BY-SA

Invisible Windrush: how the stories of Indian indentured labourers from the Caribbean were forgotten

When people think about the Windrush Generation, they are unlikely to imagine someone like my father, who was not black but a person of Indian-Caribbean heritage.



Maria del Pilar Kaladeen

Associate Fellow, Institute of Commonwealth Studies, School of Advanced Study, University of London

This is an abridged version of the author's long read published by The Conversation's Insights series.

My father never spoke to us about Guyana, the country of his birth, when we were growing up because he believed that his history had no value to his children. In doing this, he was unconsciously copying his grandparents, as well as others in his community, who had collectively chosen not to talk about their past.

Sadly, in our case, this intergenerational silence was like a bullet that ricocheted down generations. It was fired in 1886 when my 22-year-old great-grandfather was recruited from India as an indentured labourer to travel to British Guiana (the spelling changed to Guyana in 1966 after Independence) on a ship called the Foyle. It went on to the vessel that carried my father to Britain from Guyana in 1961, before taking aim at my brothers and me -- a group of disaffected and confused children who had no real understanding of what our cultural heritage was.

When my father, Surujpaul Kaladeen,

aged 23, he joined half a million other people from the Caribbean who made the journey to a new life in the UK between 1948-71. This group of people became known as the Windrush Generation.

When people think about the Windrush Generation the images they tend to associate with this period are the black and white photos taken of African-Caribbean people at Tilbury Docks or Waterloo train station.

They are unlikely to imagine someone like my father, who was not black but a person of Indian-Caribbean heritage. It took many years for me to unpick my family history and to understand that we were not the only ones to experience this kind of cultural amnesia growing up.

When my son was born in 2013, I began to understand myself in the context of being an "invisible passenger in two imperial migrations". Because, not only was the system of indenture generally unknown to the wider public, but as a consequence, the presence of Indian people in the Caribbean was also unknown. So we were never recognised as part of the Windrush Generation.

The fact that we did not look like we were part of a discernible community, and that we were constantly faced with questions about our origins, was difficult for us growing up. I believe it was a contributory factor to the tragic outcomes that followed for my family.

Caribbean heritage, but not black

In some ways, I now look at my life as an academic as one long love letter to my older brothers. I wanted to understand the role that the absence of knowing our father's history had played in shaping us as children, before we ever really had a chance to form questions about who we were.

I have dedicated my academic career to an exploration of the history and literature of indenture -- a system started in Mauritius in 1834 so the British could cheaply replace enslaved Africans following the abolition of slavery in the British empire.

More than two million people of Indian heritage were transported under this system to countries on five continents. I was convinced that in understanding the series of events that had led my ancestors from India to the Caribbean in the 19th century, I would, in turn, be able to work out what had happened to my brothers: gifted, bright and beautiful boys who had stumbled catastrophically into adulthood.

We were of Caribbean heritage, but not black. We were also of mixed heritage as our mum was white, but nobody used these labels in those days. To the world outside we were simply “pakis” -- the word British racists used as a slur for anyone of South Asian heritage.

When I was growing up, the term Windrush Generation had not yet been coined and work in universities on the idea of "Indian-Caribbean" as an identity and a diaspora had not yet begun. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why, when we were growing up, there was no vocabulary to express who we were.

Losing David and Eddie

My oldest brother David was born in 1965 and was a true child of Windrush. I mean that in the sense that he experienced the worst of the prejudice of this period.

When David died in his early 40s in

2008, having lived much of his adult life as a rough sleeper, my father was haunted by the decisions that he had made when we were children, believing that if he had just acted at a particular moment, David's life could have been different.

Nobody asked us initially to identify his body because, in typical David fashion, he had always slept with his birth certificate on his person in a plastic wallet, safe from the elements. My youngest brother, Eddie, who was born in 1973, refused to believe that the body in the hospital mortuary was David's. As my father and I stood at the edges of the room, Eddie broke free and ran to his brother, touching his face as he repeated his name in disbelief.

Then, two years ago, I cradled the scatter tube that held Eddie's ashes in my arms as my husband drove me to the crematorium where we had left David 13 years before. Found dead in his flat in the middle of the pandemic, Eddie had survived longer than anyone who loved him thought that he might.

Two years older than me, Eddie was the person in my childhood who I admired most. He was a strong, athletic boy who could draw, program computers, skateboard like a demon and write incredible stories.

And yet, his life since adolescence had been a long flirtation with death. Each of us in the family had made dashes across London to various hospitals where he had been taken after overdoses or as a result of being sectioned.

Perhaps there is no intimacy like that of a sibling relationship. I am aware that in losing David and Eddie, I have also lost parts of myself; memories that are irretrievable without them.

Who was my father?

The superiority of everything British was an idea that had been absorbed throughout my father's boyhood in Guyana, which remained a colony until 1966. This no doubt affected his perception of the importance of his own history.

I remembered a story that his older brother had told me many years before, about how my father had nearly died as a toddler, and how his South Indian grandfather, Swantimala, had come to the house and asked his daughter, my grandmother, for permission to take care of him during his illness. He returned with him only once he had recovered.

To me, this story represented everything that we had lacked growing up in London: the wonder of an extended family and the security of being born into a community of others like you.

I imagined this handsome, dark-skinned, grey-haired man striding down the road with my dad in his arms and his daughter, looking on, safe in the knowledge that he could make everything right.

I hoped that if my father, who died earlier this year, lost other memories, some trace of this sensation he would have had as a toddler could remain. That he was the beloved grandson of a man who loved his daughter, and a daughter who in turn trusted her father. A child who was in that moment safe in the land of his birth.

I am unable to give these memories of Swantimala and the comforting roots

they provide to my brothers. It is, of course, too late for that.

But in those moments where I feel that nothing can counter the pain of their loss, that my work does not matter, I am reminded that the research itself is an act of resistance - and that in advocating for the history of the "ghosts of the past", any sound I can make is better than silence.

Maria del Pilar Kaladeen is co-editor of The Other Windrush with David Dabydeen.

This is an abridged version of the author's long read published by The Conversation's Insights series.





Cherry McDonald

“Sometimes I wonder, if I didn’t travel to England, what would my life be in Jamaica? Strangely, I always refer to Jamaica as home. I mean, I’ve been living here all these years, but Jamaica is home. I don’t want to be disrespectful, but Jamaica is home.

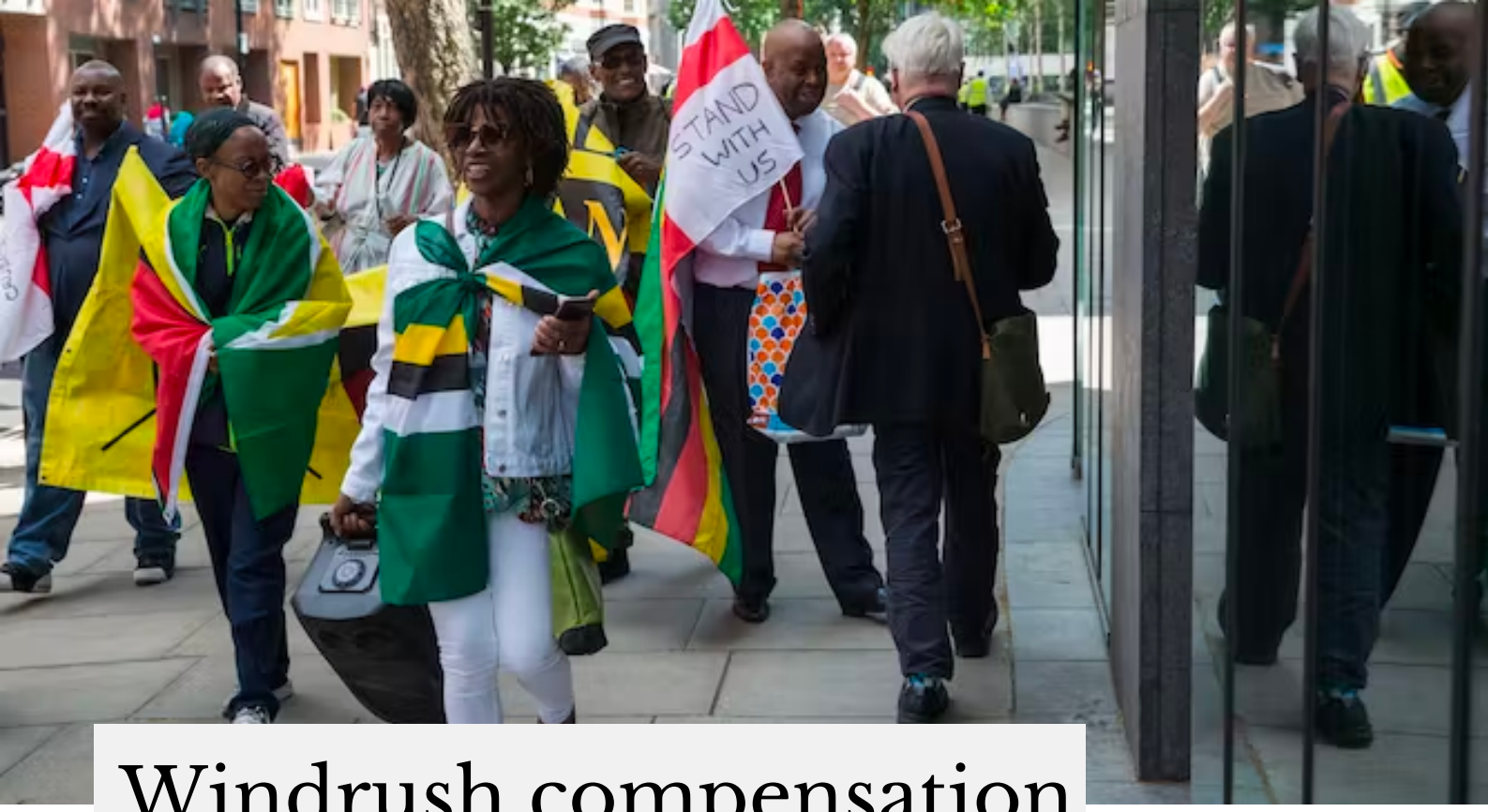


Image credit: Mark Kerrison/Alamy

Windrush compensation scheme: how the UK government is failing its citizens with this ‘belittling and horrible’ process

In the five years since the Windrush scheme was set up, the scandal of how British people have been treated by their own government has only worsened.



Shaila Pal

Director of Clinical Legal Education & Senior Lecturer, King's College London

The Windrush scheme was set up in 2018 to provide documentary confirmation of British citizenship and residency rights for the Windrush generation and other commonwealth citizens, and their children. This came in the wake of the growing scandal that had seen the Home Office, as a result of Theresa May’s hostile environment policy, repeatedly refuse existing residency rights to many people whose home had been the UK for decades.

In announcing the scheme, then home secretary Amber Rudd apologised for her government’s appalling treatment of the Windrush generation. People had suffered devastating harm. They had lost jobs and homes, and been deprived of healthcare. Many had been threatened with deportation. Some were deported to countries they had not visited since early childhood.

In the five years since, however, this

scandal has only deepened.

The UK government set up the Windrush compensation scheme in 2019, to allow victims of the Windrush scandal to claim compensation for any losses suffered as a result of being denied the right to live in the UK. But even as the wider process has revealed the true impact of historical racist immigration laws, the compensation scheme has been marred by delays and controversies. Crucially, it has largely lost the trust of the people it was set up to serve.

Despite extensive scrutiny and repeated calls for reform – from the all-party law reform and human rights organisation Justice, a home affairs select committee, the independent person appointed in 2021 by the government to assess the Windrush compensation scheme, and campaigners – very little change has occurred. In April 2023, the NGO Human Rights Watch said:

> **“[The scheme] is failing and violating the rights of many to an effective remedy of human rights abuses suffered.”**

I work in the Windrush Justice Clinic alongside community groups, law centres including Southwark Law Centre, and several universities. We help victims receive the compensation they deserve through legal casework, outreach and policy reform.

My research compares the Windrush compensation scheme with other such schemes in a bid to gauge its effectiveness. The fact that the perpetrator of the harm caused – the Home Office – has primary responsibility for decisions and the rules of this scheme is a fundamental design flaw.

A humiliating process

In January 2022, Vincent McBean – an ex-serviceman who arrived in the UK from Jamaica with his brother Edwin when he was eight – sought help from the Windrush Justice Clinic. McBean’s children were born in the UK and lived here for a number of years, before he sent them to Ghana for their early schooling. Since 2010, he has been trying, unsuccessfully to bring them back.

Vincent McBean’s British citizenship was only recognised through the Windrush scheme in 2019, and his brother’s was not recognised until July 2022. This long delay saw Edwin denied the care and supported accommodation he has needed subsequent to a lengthy hospital stay after contracting COVID.

The impact on the family has been devastating, and both brothers are seeking compensation. As Vincent puts it:

> **“I have been forcibly separated from my children for many years and watched my brother suffer. Edwin lived in a cramped room completely unsuited to his health needs. There were points he had no carers, so I had to do everything for him, which also impacted my health. When I tried to resolve the situation, I found the system belittling and horrible. If you can imagine, I fought for England – [yet] I was treated like a second-class citizen.”**

A flawed system

The failure of the Windrush compensation scheme to deliver justice is down both to how it was designed and how it is being delivered. To Vincent's mind, it is too complicated and bureaucratic, designed to stop people claiming compensation.

The application form is 44 pages long. The exacting standard of proof for claims has been somewhat revised, but applicants are still expected to provide extensive evidence to demonstrate the loss they have suffered – a standard that legal experts have likened to the criminal standard of proof. In April 2023, for example, Human Rights Watch reported that victims were being told letters from local councils demonstrating periods of homelessness were not deemed sufficient.

This is despite the architect of the scheme, Martin Forde, testifying in court that it was only ever meant to be "light touch on requirements for documentation". Forde said he had expected Home Office staff to trust people:

I did not expect them to ask people in their seventies to do the legwork, and to provide documentation that they would obviously not have.

At the same time, the application form does not adequately cover all the suffering that people have experienced. They cannot claim for loss of pensions, savings and property, among other things.

The fraught nature of this initial application process is only compounded by the ineffectiveness and lack of independence of the appeals system. There is no right of appeal to an independent tribunal. Instead, applicants may challenge the amount of compensation awarded or a decision that they are ineligible by seeking a review. This "tier-1" review is undertaken by the Home Office.

If applicants are unhappy with this decision, they can seek a tier-2 review, which the government describes as being carried out by an "independent person". In reality, it is carried out by HMRC – the UK's tax authority, another government department. And it can only make recommendations.

In May 2021, the National Audit Office found that more than half of all Windrush compensation cases had been inadequately processed. It highlighted mistakes and inconsistencies in how caseworkers had calculated compensation, stating: "The department's quality-assurance processes are not identifying all errors."

As of March 2023, approximately 42% of the more than 2,000 applicants whose Windrush compensation scheme claims had been refused were seeking a review. And despite continuing concerns about the arbitrary nature of the decisions, only 7% of those applying for a final review of their claim had received an increase in compensation.

Insufficient support

The UK government has not made legal aid available for compensation claims, because its Legal Aid Agency believes the legal issues involved in these claims do not relate to relevant human rights. The Southwark Law Centre is currently challenging this position in court.

Instead of providing legal support to victims, the government funds a third-party training provider, We Are Digital.

This provider cannot provide legal advice on the substance of the compensation application. However, it nonetheless purports to assist claimants in completing the application form with a maximum of three hours support – assistance that a report by Justice characterised as "of limited value".

Experienced lawyers, in their evidence to the Home Affairs Committee, have reported spending an average of 45 hours on Windrush compensation claims. Comparable compensation schemes, including those where the application process is significantly less complex, have a system in place for victims to recover their legal costs – but nothing exists for Windrush claimants.

The compensation scheme thus perpetuates the heavy evidential burden and culture of disbelief that has been emblematic of the hostile environment policy. The re-victimisation is profound. In research carried out in 2022, a Windrush victim said of his dealings with the Home Office in relation to the scheme:

> **"It is almost like they are telling me: 'We are really, really sorry for punching you in the face – however, we are sure you've recovered now, it wasn't that bad of a punch, so here is another punch in the face but don't worry about that one, because you've already recovered. Please accept some tape and cotton wool to make a plaster out of.'"**

Vincent McBean, who is president of the West Indian Association of Service Personnel, says many veterans have come to see him about their situations. He encourages them to make claims but says many won't have anything to do with it, suggesting:

> **"The government cannot be trusted. They have no integrity and they are making it very hard for people."**

The Home Office has acknowledged that distrust in the government is one reason for the low uptake in the scheme. Estimates put the number of people eligible for compensation at between 11,500-15,000. And yet, as of February 2023, only 5,647 applications have been made, of which 2,012 (36%) have been refused and 1,520 (27%) received a payment.

In other words, four years after the compensation scheme was set up, only one in ten of the eligible cohort have received a compensation payment.

"By the time I get anything, I will be dead," Edwin McBean recently told me. At least 23 people have so far died while waiting for a decision.

The system in place to deliver the Windrush compensation scheme is too slow, lacks independence, and is wholly unsuited to an ageing cohort. One senior civil servant working on the compensation scheme put it plainly in evidence provided to the home affairs select committee in 2021. This scheme, she said, is "systematically racist and unfit for purpose".

The Home Office has been approached for comment.



Image credit: Courtesy of the London Transport

How cricket helped Windrush arrivals build a sense of 'home' in Britain

Cricket was a significant bridge between England and 'home' in the Caribbean.



Michael Collins

Associate Professor of Modern and Contemporary British History, UCL

Cricket was played extensively in Britain in the 1950s, in towns, villages and cities, both in workplaces and as a social activity. And the sport had also become a ubiquitous cultural pastime in the English-speaking Caribbean.

Indeed, cricket was a key part of Britain's cultural imperialism, with the game helping to convey ideas about social order (in the colonial Caribbean, cricket clubs were segregated on the basis both of class and "race"). An emphasis on respecting the rules, "fair play" and sporting behaviour all enhanced this sense of white English prestige.

After the second world war, racism forced many new Windrush arrivals – predominantly black Caribbean men looking for employment in manual jobs – to set up their own cricket clubs. One such club is the still-active Carnegie CC, created in 1955 to cater for Caribbean cricketers in and around the Brixton area.

For the Windrush generation, the sport held a particular importance, as my forthcoming book, Windrush Cricket: Caribbean Migration and The Remaking of Post-War England documents. Speaking of cricket in his 1963 memoir Beyond a Boundary, the great Trinidadian writer C.L.R. James claimed that:

> **There is a whole generation of us, and perhaps two generations, who have been formed by it not only in social attitudes but in our most intimate personal lives, in fact there more than anywhere else.**

Despite widespread racism, some Caribbean cricket celebrities were feted by and ultimately found favour with the political establishment. Learie Constantine, for example, became the first black person to sit in the House of Lords in 1969.

Cricketers such as Dr Bertie Clarke, who had played for the West Indies before the war, were integral to glamorous social networks of cricket at the BBC. There, he worked with Una Marson (the radio host and first black woman hired by the BBC) and other new arrivals from the Caribbean on the London Calling radio programme.

By the late 1960s and into the 1970s, there was a rich ecosystem of Caribbean cricket across Britain. black cricket clubs were widely formed across English cities, starting with Leeds Caribbean (set up in 1948) and swiftly followed by others such as Sheffield Caribbeans, Bristol West Indians and the West Indian Cricket and Sports Club in Manchester.

The clubs and competitions were created by black people themselves, and were a significant bridge between England and "home" in the Caribbean – making cricket an important part of the black Atlantic cultural exchange.

London Transport and cricket

London Transport was a major employer in post-war London, and often emphasised sport and recreation facilities in its recruitment materials.

Pamphlets circulated in Barbados informed prospective applicants that, alongside their day jobs on the buses and London Underground, migrant workers would have ample opportunity to play cricket in the capital. By the later 1950s, London Transport had become a big focus for the development of Caribbean cricket in England.

Some of those who arrived saw themselves as temporary visitors, yet travelled back to the Caribbean to play cricket as Londoners. One example is the highly successful Central Road Services (CRS) team, named after a bus garage in south London.

According to Chris Hope, a bus conductor recruited in Barbados:

> **Most Barbadians were into cricket and Central Road Services cricket team had three or four venues such as Langley Park and Osterley. That's how we passed our time ... The Caribbean islanders used to mix and you were glad to see other black people, to be honest.**

In 1975, the CRS team jetted back to Barbados for a cricket tour in an example of the trajectories of migration and return which created layers of identity and belonging for this generation. For many, the idea of home would shift according to context, and cricket could provide a cultural and social link between their two worlds.

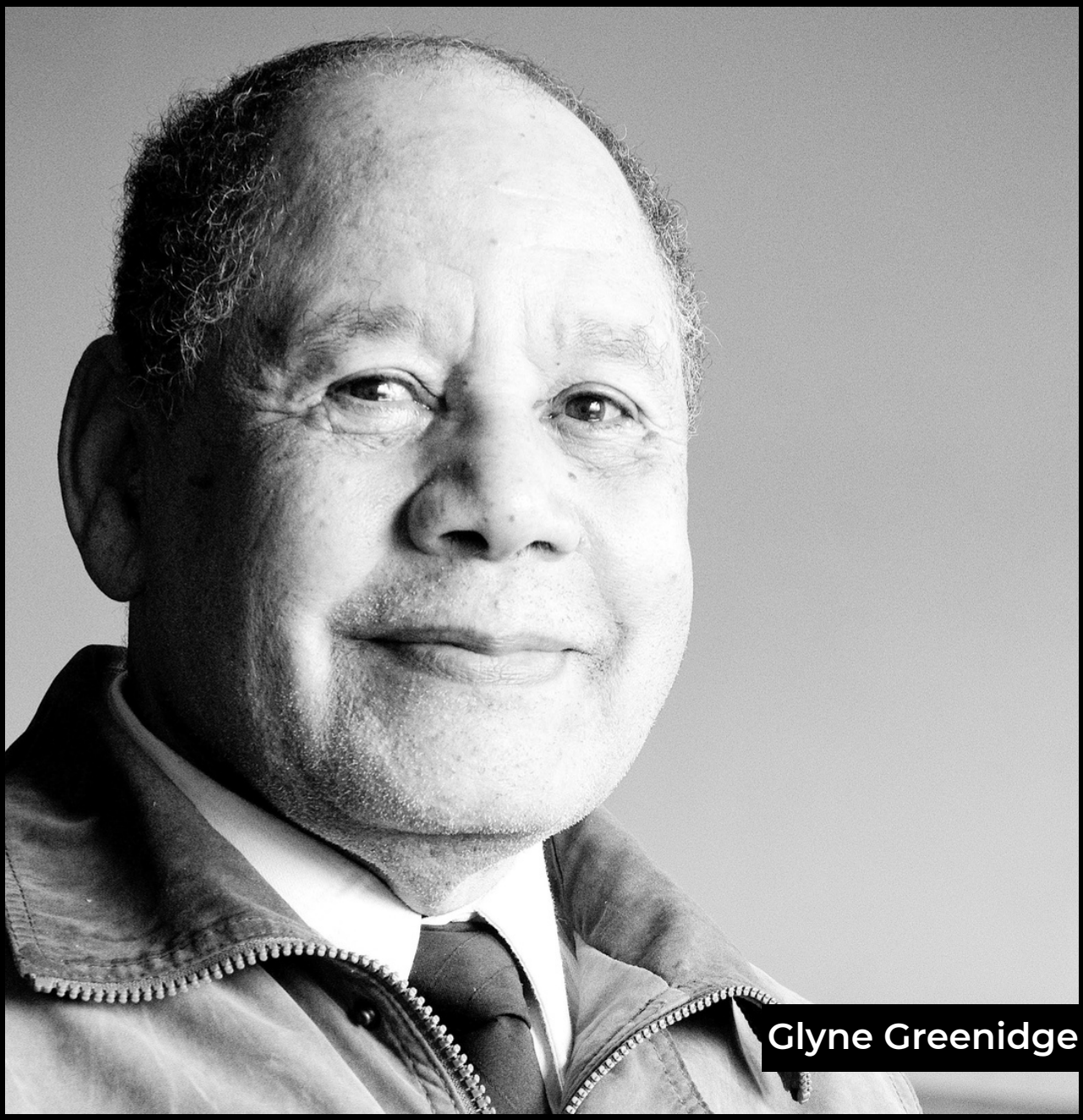
Lorenzo Daniels, another bus conductor recruited in Barbados, recalled:

“I came over so young and settled down here. I made this my life. This is my home. Barbados is the place where I was born.”

Through self-organisation and sheer hard work, some of them, such as Devon Malcolm, Phillip DeFreitas and David Lawrence, rose to represent the England national cricket team. However, their successes frequently provoked a racist backlash, which pointed to deep faultlines opening up in terms of what it meant to be English in a postcolonial world.

Other Windrush cricket-lovers worked at the community level, providing opportunities for young people and spaces for black Caribbean people across generations to interact with each other, in ways that paralleled and intersected with the church and social clubs.

Part of a story of black British history that goes far beyond protest, policing and “resistance”, this remarkable generation of Windrush cricketers were pioneers of community building in England. In so doing, they helped transform what it means to be British.



Glyne Greenidge

“I had to find work and it was mainly in the cotton mills – I worked nights, mainly. And I met one of my best friends, an English lad called Kevin. Best friend I ever had. They were Irish people, you see. He didn’t look down on anybody. He saw people as people. So he never used any racist remarks. In fact, he would defend me and help me out at times if I felt low and depressed.

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