

Beyond the Windrush

For decades after their arrival, Caribbean migrants endured hostile racism, police violence, and employment and housing discrimination. When the Caribbean islands gained independence, their citizenship status in Britain was suddenly challenged. Despite these immense obstacles, West Indians remained resilient; they formed strong bonds within their community and fought for dignity, equality, and representation.

Bristol Bus Boycott ends discriminatory hiring practices

1960s

First Caribbean island gains independence

1970s

Immigration Act removes automatic right of Commonwealth citizens to live in Britain

First Black Members of Parliament elected

1980s

Last Caribbean island gains independence

The Windrush Generation Today

In the 2010s, the British government required migrants to prove their legal status by providing multiple records for each year of residence in Britain. Yet, the Home Office destroyed the landing cards of Windrush migrants. Without documentation, people could be denied vital services and deportation.

In 2018, Prime Minister Theresa May publicly apologized and a government investigation ensued. In the final inquiry report of 2020, thirty recommendations were made, including a review of immigration policy and a new program to repay those who were impacted by these hostile policies.

Yet, the government's commitment to these reforms and compensation remains unclear.

Scan the QR code below to listen to **The National Archives' Spotify playlist**, highlighting Caribbean artists who transformed British music through new styles and sounds.

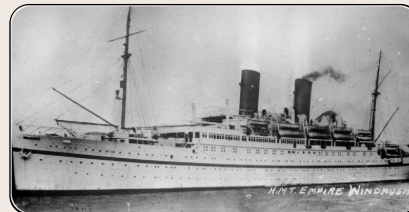


DID YOU KNOW?

- Thousands of West Indians fought for Britain in WWII.
- The Windrush's passenger list was diverse, including Polish refugees and descendants of indentured laborers from Asia.
- West Indians make up Connecticut's largest immigrant population today.

Learn more about the Windrush Generation...

National Windrush Museum
The Windrush Monument
The National Archives (UK)
The Windrush Scandal Oral History Project



Source: Imperial War Museums



LEARN MORE

Created by HMA Summer Graduate Intern Chi-Ann Lin



Iyaba Ibo Mandingo, "Every day new people arrived, looking for work, any kind of work." 2023

Arwe Journey

The Windrush Generation



Recent arrivals at London's Waterloo Station
Source: The Windrush Monument

HOUSATONIC MUSEUM OF ART

What is the Windrush Generation?

On June 22, 1948, after a month-long voyage across the Atlantic Ocean, 1,027 passengers arrived near London on the **HMT Empire Windrush**. The ship, which set sail from Trinidad with stops in Jamaica, Mexico, Cuba, and Bermuda, carried more than 800 Caribbean migrants. Today, the term "**Windrush Generation**" refers to these West Indian migrants from British colonies and later groups that came to Britain through the early 1970s. Since 2018, **Windrush Day** on June 22 celebrates the many Caribbean contributions to British society and culture.



Source: The Windrush Monument

Excerpt from "A West Indian in England" by H.D. Carberry and Dudley Thompson

"The light in England is never as fierce in intensity and brilliance as it is at home, nor is the range of natural colours as great. Instead, there is a soft pastel effect, with light blues and greys, and days of really brilliant sunshine are so rare that when they do come the entire scene is transformed and seems quite strange and foreign."

Source: The National Archives

17th C.

Barbados becomes Britain's first Caribbean colony

18th C.

Britain profits from Caribbean crops such as sugar and mahogany

19th C.

Slavery ends in the British Empire

The British Caribbean: A Long History

The British had deep ties in the West Indies centuries before the Windrush set sail. Britain extended its vast empire into the Caribbean. This was followed by the transport of enslaved Africans to the islands, resulting in devastating exploitation of resources and people.

Prime Minister Attlee's Letter to Parliament on Immigration Policy on July 5, 1948

"The majority of them are honest workers, who can make a genuine contribution to our labour difficulties at the present time."

"If our policy were to result in a great influx of undesirables, we might, however unwillingly, have to consider modifying it."

Source: The National Archives

Why did the British government encourage Caribbean migration?

The death toll and physical destruction from WWII resulted in a dire need for workers to help rebuild the country. Consequently, the government recruited West Indians to move to Britain to fill positions in areas like construction and health care, as well as take jobs deemed undesirable by the British.

"You Called...And We Came."

Poem by Laura Serrant

You called....and we came.
Our big hearts, skilful hands and quick minds
encased in our skins – of a darker hue.
Which had shimmered and glowed
in our sunnier climes.
But now signified our difference
– our un-belonging.
Matrons became assistants
Nurses became like chambermaids.
All the while striving to fulfil our promise
– to succour, to serve, to care.

Source: The Windrush Monument

1945

High unemployment and labor unrest in Caribbean colonies

1948

Windrush passengers arrive in London and are granted citizenship

1950s

British recruitment drives attract more migrants to fill postwar jobs

Why did West Indians migrate to Britain?

Half a million West Indians left loved ones and risked the unknown to embark on this bold journey in the 1930s. They were largely motivated by better economic opportunities in Britain, as they faced high unemployment, inadequate health care, and the lack of a quality education in the Caribbean.



Steve Eason, Windrush Scandal protest – from Parliament Square to the Home Office, London. 28th April 2018.