

LANDMARKS IN LONDON HISTORY

Week 9. Immigration and Empire





Haywood Magee, Arrivals at Victoria (1956)

‘London is not, and never has been a city of native Londoners.
For nearly all of its history it has been fed by migration’
– Lindsey German and John Rees, *A People’s History of London*
(2012)

‘Perhaps no movement into Britain since that of the nineteenth
century Irish has had as profound an impact on Britain as the
migration from the Indian sub-continent and the West Indies’
– Panikos Panayi, *Anti-Immigrant Violence in 19th and 20th
Century Britain* (1996)



‘It is not, as many commentators suggest, that the presence of immigrants corrodes the homogeneity and solidarity that are necessary to the cohesion and mutuality of authentically social-democratic regimes, but rather that, in their flight from socialist principles and welfare-state inclusivity, these beleaguered regimes have produced strangers and aliens as the limit against which increasingly evasive national particularity can be seen, measured and then, if needs be, negatively discharged’

– Paul Gilroy, *There Ain't no black in the Union Jack* (2002)

Key questions

1. What were the experiences of Commonwealth migrants in London after World War Two?
2. What forms of employment, housing, and new cultural associations and forms would develop?
3. What motives, cultures and ideas about England did migrants bring with them?
4. How did London and Londoners respond to growing immigration and new migrant communities?



Les nouvelles d'Espagne

London – a brief history of migration

- ‘when I consider this great city, in its several quarters, or divisions, I look upon it as an aggregate of various nations, distinguished from each other by their respective customs, manners and interests’ – Joseph Addison, mid-18th century
- ‘I do not at all like that city ... All sorts of men crowd there from every country under the heavens. Each brings his own vices and its own customs to the city’ – Richard of Devizes, 1185
- London was ‘overflowing’ with Poitevins, Provencals, Italians and Spaniards’ in 1255 (Matthew Paris)



London – a brief history of migration

‘... every character of form and face:

The Swede, the Russian; from the genial south,
The Frenchman and the Spaniard; from remote
America, the Hunter-Indian; Moors,
Malays, Lascars, the Tartar and Chinese
And Negro Ladies in white muslin gowns’

William Wordsworth, *The Prelude* (1805)



London – a brief history of migration

- London, a city established by a European superpower for the purpose of trade and military power, and a site of continual immigration
- Earliest records indicate a mixture of European peoples in the City
- London has been home to migrant communities seeking refuge, including French Huguenots, Ashkenazi Jews, the Irish, as well as, from the early 20th century, South Asian and Caribbean peoples



THE EVIL MAY-DAY.

ATTACK ON LOSERS BY THE JORDON ASSAULTERS MAY 1, 1841.



London – a brief history of migration

- But the city has an equal history of reaction and persecution...
- The mass hangings and expulsion of Jews from London in 1272
- Evil May Day in 1517
- Gordon Riots and anti-Irish riots across 18th century...
- 'this realm hath of late been pestered with a great number of Irish beggars, who live here idly and dangerously, and are of ill-example to the natives' (1629 edict)
- 'greater numbers than ordinary being here ... letting themselves out to all sorts of ordinary labour ... considerably cheaper than the English labourers have' (Robert Walpole, 1736)



Black Georgians in Britain

- **Ignatius Sancho** (1729-1780), born on a mid-Atlantic slave ship. Self-taught, later a friend of the Duke of Montagu
- Opens a grocer's shop in Westminster and composes music, and becomes a leading anti-abolitionist campaigner
- **Francis Barber** (1735-1801), valet and later companion of Samuel Johnson
- **Olaudah Equiano** (1745-1797), born in Eastern Nigeria, and kidnapped into slavery
- Named Gustavus Vassa, he buys his freedom for £40 and becomes a leading political figure in the black community and slave abolitionist
- Writes and tours *The Interesting Narrative* around the UK in 1791-2
- **Phillis Wheatley** (1753-84), a child prodigy and poet

'Twas mercy brought me from my Pagan land,
Taught my benighted soul to understand
That there's a God, that there's a Saviour too
Once I redemption neither sought nor knew.
Some view our sable race with scornful eye,
"Their colour is a diabolic dye."

Remember, Christians, Negroes, black as Cain.
May be refin'd, and join th' angelic train'

- 'On being brought from Africa to America' (Wheatley, 1773)



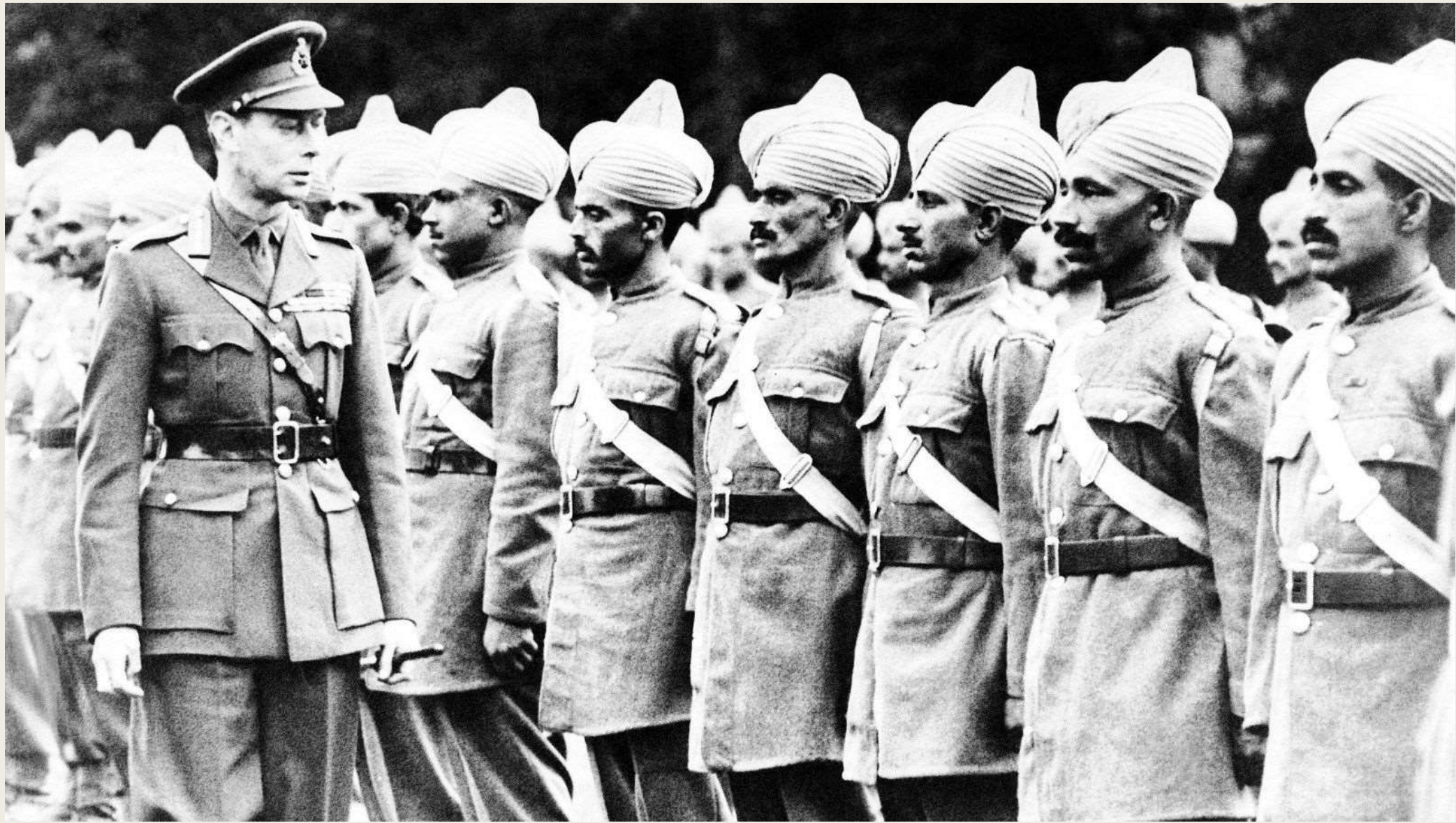




From War to Windrush

- Up until 1914, black workers were often in casual, low-paid work
- With the outbreak of war, new employment prospects...
- Many began working in munitions factories and merchant navy
- Churchill campaigned for a 'Million Black Army'...
- Black British and Colonial military regiments e.g. Kings African Rifles and British West Indies Regiment
- The first shot of WW1 fired by Alhaji Grunshi of the Gold Coast Regiment, Togoland, 12th August 1914 (Stephen Bourne)
- By end of WW1, 15,000 West Indians had entered military service
- After the war, many subject to violence and discrimination
- Race riots in Liverpool, Cardiff and London over 1919, with Charles Wootton murdered





From War to Windrush

- Estimates vary for WW2 involvement, as ethnicity not recorded
- **Three and half million** Black and Asian service personnel support Britain in WW2 (Trevor McDonald)
- **372,000** Africans who fought for Britain (Bourne), including 6000 in the RAF
- Unlike WW1, these roles were skilled and often front-line
- King's African Rifles and Royal West African Frontier Force fought in Abyssinia, Somalia, Madagascar and Burma
- **170,000** American personnel in Britain, of which **11,000** were black





Black American GIs

- Very popular reception in Britain
- Contemporaries complain instead of white American racism...
- 'The general consensus of opinion seems to be that the only American soldiers with decent manners are the Negroes' (Orwell)
- In Bristol, one pub sign 'Only blacks served here', and another landlady after complaints from white American GIs: 'Their money is as good as yours, and we prefer their company'
- 'We ain't no slaves, this is England' – Cosham, Portsmouth, 1943
- But a gradual moral panic and repression of relationships between black GIs and white British women
- *David Olusoga's Black and British* a very good source here



West Indian Immigration from 1948

- 1948 Nationality Act = 800 million subjects of the British Empire free to live and work in the UK.
- West Indies: high unemployment, high cost of living, no social relief and severe hurricanes.
- Britain: plenty of work and active recruitment in the West Indies (London Transport and the newly formed NHS).
- Estimated 10,000 West Indians had served in the British military during the war.
- Positive image that the British had always tried to construct and maintain as imperial rulers.

EMPIRE MEN FLEE NO JOBS LAND: 500 HOPE TO START A NEW LIFE TODAY

‘Five hundred unwanted people, picked up by the trooper Empire Windrush after it had roamed the Caribbean, Mexican Gulf, and Atlantic for 27 days are hoping for a new life. They include 430 Jamaican men. And there are 60 Polish women who wandered from Siberia, via India, Australia, New Zealand and Africa to Mexico, where they embarked in the Empire Windrush. The Jamaicans are fleeing from a land with large unemployment. Many of them recognise the futility of their life at home.’

(Daily Express, 21 June 1948)



Empire Windrush

- On 22nd June 1948, an ex-German troopship renamed the Empire Windrush docked in Tilbury.
- On board were 492 passengers, the vast majority of which were Jamaican men
- The ship had docked in Kingston Harbour to collect a handful of ex-RAF servicemen who were there on leave.
- The enterprising captain of the vessel advertised half-price fares at £28 10s so as to fill the empty ship.

'I DON'T KNOW WHO SENT THEM'

A shipload of worry for Mr George Isaacs, Minister of Labour, will arrive at Tilbury on Saturday week - 500 West Indians, all seeking jobs in Britain. Mr Isaacs confessed his worry to MPs yesterday. He said he does not know who sent the men. 'All I know,' he added, 'is that they are in a ship and are coming here. They are British citizens and we shall do our best for them when they arrive.'

But MPs did not allow the mystery of 500 British citizens to rest there.

Mr Stanley (Tory: Bristol, W.) asked: Will you find out who is responsible for this extraordinary action?

Mr Isaacs: That is already being done. I wish I knew, but I do not. Those who organised the movement of these people to Britain did them a disservice in not contacting the Labour Ministry and giving it a chance to take care of them.

Mr Hughes (Soc: Ayshire, S.): Will you let them see the housing conditions in Scotland? Then they will want to go back to the West Indies.

Mr Driberg (Soc: Maldon, Essex): Will you instruct your officials to meet the ship and help them find work in undermanned industries in the interests of production and welfare?

Mr Isaacs: They will be met at the ship and told how to register for unemployment. The arrival of these substantial numbers of men under no organised arrangements is bound to result in difficulty and disappointment. I have no knowledge of their qualifications or capacity, and can give no assurance that they can be found suitable work. I hope no encouragement will be given to others to follow them. (*Daily Express*, Tuesday 8 June 1948)

Labour shortages

- *Orbita* brings 180 to Liverpool (1948); *Reina del Pacifico* 39; the *Georgic* 253 (1949)...
- Numbers of West Indian migrants increase from 1951
- 1956: London Transport undertook a recruitment campaign in Barbados – by 1958, LT had 4000 black employees
- British Hotels and Restaurants Association also targeted Trinidad
- 24,000 in 1954; 26,000 1956; 22,000 1957; 16,000 1958
- By 1958, 210,000 people from the commonwealth living and working in Britain
- Only 13% of men and 5% women unskilled (Fryer)

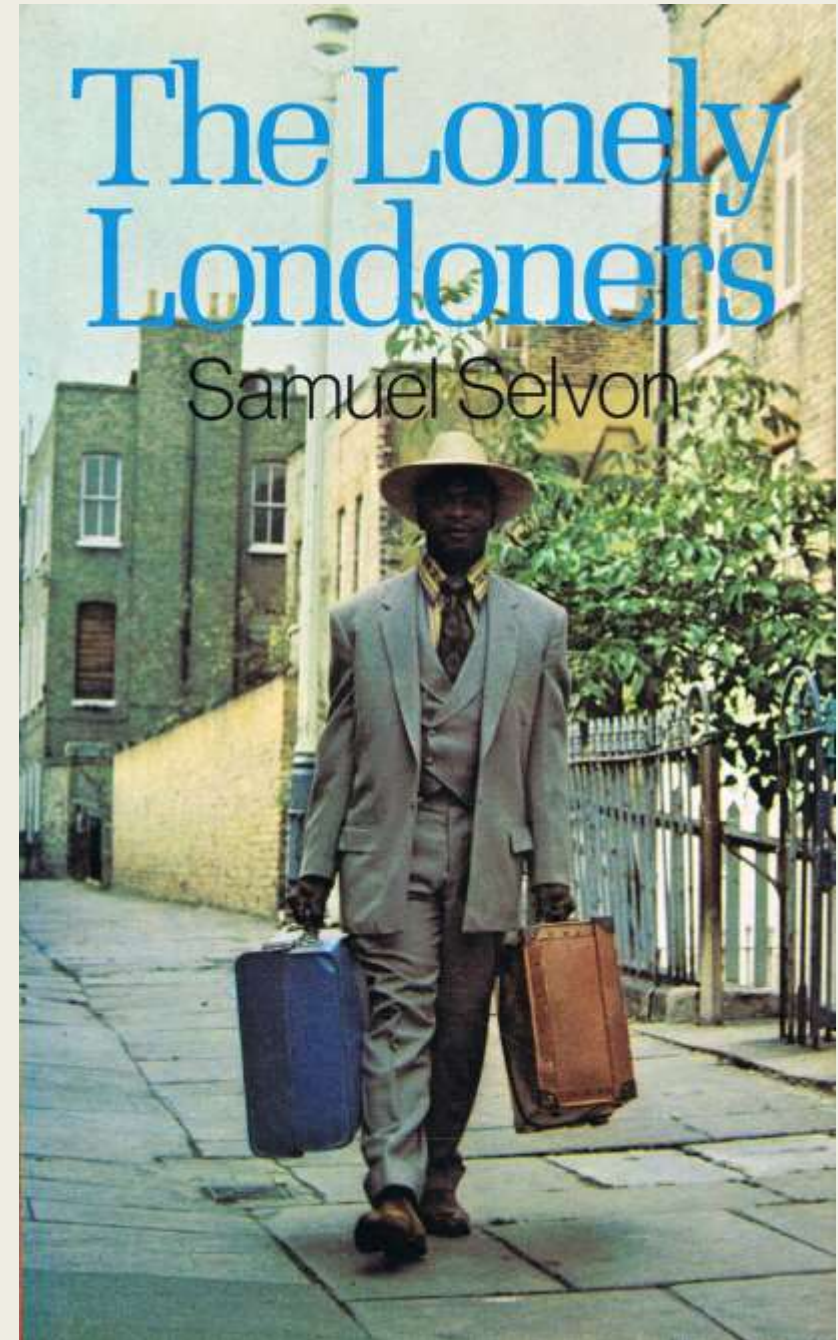


Lord Kitchener sings

London is the place for me, London that lovely city.
You can go to France or America, India, Asia, or Africa.
But you must come back to London city.
I said, London is the place for me. London, that lovely city.
You can go to France or America, India, Asia or America.
But you must come back, to London city.

London is the place for me. London this lovely city.
You can go to France or America, India, Asia or Africa.
But you must come back to London city.
London, this lovely city.
You can go to France or America, India, Asia or America.
But you must come back to London city.





Life for West Indian immigrants in Britain

- Most initial migrants were working-age men, expecting to work in Britain for no more than five years, then return home wealthier
- Stories about England transmitted from servicemen
- A land of chimneys, dirt, smoke, and, to a significant extent, casual racism
- 'The Jamaicans - and others with them - have been sorted into two groups: Group One: 82, who are volunteering for the Forces, will go to a Wimpole Street hostel (cost to them £1 1s a week). Group Two: 104 who have friends in England. Group Three: the rest with no contacts, who will go by motor coach to deep shelters on Clapham Common (cost 2/6d a week).'





Life for West Indian immigrants in Britain

Employment:

Plenty of work but mostly of an unskilled nature.

Prejudice:

Imperial racialist ideas of savagery, barbarism and incivility still prominent.

Housing:

Limited choices, mostly in poor areas, at the mercy of exploitation.

Community:

Cultural, economic, geographical and emotional bonding leads to formation of immigrant communities.



Life for South Asian immigrants

- Often lacked the language skills of West Indian migrants
- White trade unionists resisted employment of non-white workers, e.g. West Midlands bus conductors
- 'The first generation Asian immigrant in Britain . . . was not used to the mores and practices of an industrialised society. His presence was resented, and he suffered racist insults and indignities. He was denied a decent house and a job commensurate with his abilities. He was often not promoted to a higher position . . . The Asian immigrants are predictably frightened and bewildered. They are haunted by a sense of impending tragedy.'



Racism

- First-wave Caribbean immigration in the 1940s; hostility stemmed from a sense of the unfamiliar and from predominant public understanding the colonies
- Peter Fryer, in *Staying Power* (1984); two-thirds of Britain's white population held a low opinion of black people partly because of the preconceived ideas generated from imperial propaganda
- Dichotomy compounded by ideas in the colonies; Britain seen as a benevolent 'mother country' that wanted to help, nurture and support rather than suppress and control.



Racism

- Immigrants were usually denied skilled work
- Often denied roles in which they would serve the public
- Many cultural venues (pubs, clubs, dancehalls) operated an overt colour bar
- Housing too was a major issue; few lodging houses would accept immigrants
- Immigrants mostly at the mercy of slum landlords; tended to concentrate them into certain areas
- One such area being Notting Hill in West London.





Notting Hill Disturbances (1958)

- August 1958 – anti-black rioting in Nottingham; and a petrol bomb attack on a West Indian family home in Camden in 1954
- Notting Hill in the late 1950s; very mixed area with extremes of wealth and poverty juxtaposed alongside one another
- Neighbouring Notting Dale; predominantly white, working-class neighbourhood but numbers of young black men in nearby Notting Hill increasing
- Racial tensions stirred up by Oswald Moseley's Union Movement and Colin Jordan's White Defence League; in August 1958 these boiled over into four days of racial violence
- Six West Indians were badly injured, and nine white youths imprisoned

DAILY HERALD

No. 13218 (D)

Monday, September 1, 1958

Price 22d

PAPER
THAT
CARES

Frightened men barricade themselves in

NEW RIOT TERROR

**5,000 rage round
London streets**

POLICE ARREST SCORES

By HERALD REPORTING TEAM:

Robert Eickford, Denis Potts,

Robert Truist, Peter Whittle

A NEGRO-HATING mob of 5,000 stormed through London streets last night shouting for lynchings and blood.

Armed with milk bottles and stones, they roamed the Notting Hill area attacking coloured people, fighting with police and smashing windows in a





Notting Hill Disturbances (1958)

- Over August, homes were petrol-bombed, West Indians often chased and threatened with lynchings, and abusive letters sent to West Indian homes...
- Hit and runs and mob attacks across London and elsewhere e.g. Middlesbrough
- The *Manchester Guardian* reported that 'some of the West Indians, who always come here with such high hopes, are so downcast that they are talking seriously about accepting the last humiliation and getting a ship home'.
- 'A black man's treated worse than a dog here. They watch you wherever you go. You daren't go out in the evening – it's a prison, this country.'

Kelso Cochrane

- May 1959: an Antiguan carpenter, Kelso Cochrane, was murdered in Paddington by a gang of six white youths
- As one mourner described it, 'it was our awakening'.





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Deportation for Jobless West Indians?

A WIDE discussion continues
about Coloured Emigration
in Britain. This discussion came
to a climax when, last year the
Coloured Emigration Bill was passed by the
Parliament.

The Tories and Liberals who
were still campaigning for this
measure then used the argument
that coloured immigrants were
"stealing jobs". Today
there are again being heard
singing variations of coloured
immigrants.

Recently a local newspaper
even went so far as to suggest
that unemployed immigrants be
deported or be financially
supported by the government.
Commenting on the recent
Government proposals for
higher National Insurance bene-
fits and wage protection and other
warping a few crisscross lines
for those overseas incomes for
pensioners, widowed mothers,
and old age and what it termed
"the less protected sections of
our society," it continued:

"With regard to the increase
of tax shillings weekly to be
paid in respect of standard rates
of unemployment and sickness
benefits, one can only hope that
there will be some sort of com-
promise that with some 800,000
unemployed in this country at
the moment, some of the thou-
sands of immigrants who appear
almost daily at our employment
exchanges or the offices of the
National Assistance Board will
either be returned to their
countries or substantially supported
financially by their respec-
tive governments. However
laxative this country has enough
hardship to bear without being
asked to support thousands of
immigrants, their numerous
progeny and their grandchildren
too." (St. Francis Chronicle,
Editorial "What We Think",
February 22, 1965)

An coloured Commonwealth citi-
zen we have come to expect such

WEST INDIAN GAZETTE

And Afro-Asian Caribbean News

Vol. 5, No. 5, APRIL, 1965

Price 6d.

210 Strand Street, London, S.W.1. Phone: 881 1714

Barbados Votes for "Little 8"

Eastern Caribbean Union Moves Ahead

THE Barbados House of Assembly last month
voted unanimously in approval of the entry of Barbados into
the proposed Federation of the Eastern Caribbean.

The members would be the
"Little 8" British West Indian
Islands—Barbados, Antigua, Domini-
ca, Grenada, Montserrat, St. Kitts,
St. Lucia and St. Vincent.

Earlier, according to an as-
sessment from the Colonial
Office, it was learned that the month
of June has been set aside for the
holding of independence talks be-

tween the "Little 8" Ministers and
the "Majority" Government.
(For more news on "Little 8",
see pages 6 and 7.)

WHERE FRIENDSHIP IS BEING FORGED . . .



Students from Africa, Asia and Latin America in Phoenix
Laboratory at Pacific Lutheran University in Moscow. (See pages 4 & 5.)

SOVIETS TO BUY B.G. RICE

THE Soviet Union has agreed to
buy 7,500 tons of rice from
British Guiana for £2,500,000 British
West Indian dollars (about \$42,000
according to an announcement from
Guiana last month).

Shipment was scheduled to be-
gin in late February or early
March. The amount paid for the
Soviet Government is based on the
price paid by Cuba.

One of B.G.'s largest rice
consumers (from whom it was an-
nounced would take 25,000 tons of
rice in Trinidad and Tobago,
Trinidad and Tobago, Suriname, low
estimated amount in London
High Commission that it will no
longer buy B.G. rice, since the price
B.G. sells (and has now paid) at
other than Commonwealth prices,
cannot be met by them. Efforts
were being made by the Trinidad
and Tobago Government to purchase
the rice it needs from
Guiana.

GHANA DEGREE FOR DR. DUBOIS

Dr. W. E. B. DuBois, noted
American Negro historian and
scholar, was awarded the honorary
doctor's degree by Ghana Univer-
sity on May 19th last.

A celebration marking the Dr.
DuBois birthday was held at
Ghana University last month at-
tended by numerous scholars and
other prominent figures from foreign
countries.

Dr. DuBois recently attended
Ghana University. He has been
visiting in Ghana since 1960 lead-
ing the work of compiling an African
Encyclopedia.

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ADVICE FREELY GIVEN

UK West Indians Set to Welcome Cricketers

WEST INDIANS in the U.K.
and their many fans are
all set to welcome the West
Indian cricket team.

With 17 players, a manager
and assistant manager, the
famous team leaves Jamaica
on their north tour of England
on March 25. The tour will last
six months.

MORRILL TO CAPTAIN TEAM

Frank Morrill, known as a
great sportsman for his "bravery
of stroke" and one of the
world's leading cricketers even-
will be leading the West Indian
team in his third series and his
second overseas. Since taking
over the job of captaincy the
West Indian team has made
splendid strides towards
emerging as world leaders.

The West Indian team lost 1-2
only to Australia in 1963-64 in
a series which indicated a Test
tie, that is, achieved in the
series that saved Test cricket.

The West Indian team's first
Test victory since 1945-46, against
England and Australia, the
only cricketers to achieve this
feat.

The touring party will include
legendary Alfred Valentine,
who made the 1959 tour and
together with Morrill will be on
their third visit to England on a
West Indian team.

(Continued on back page)

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Notting Hill Carnival begins...

- West Indian Gazette – London based monthly newspaper edited by Trinidadian journalist Claudia Jones
- Organiser of the original Notting Hill Carnival which took place in January 1959 ('Caribbean Carnival')
- Events in Notting Hill set an agenda for how the black community viewed British law, including the police and the courts
- Notting Hill Carnival formally begins in 1966 however, with support from 'hippies' based at the London Free School...





Black radicalisation

- 1959: around 4,500 West Indians left the country, compared to previous averages of around 150 a year
- BUT... organisations were also formed:
- United African-Asia League: set up by Baron Baker
- The Association for the Advancement of Coloured People: set up by Amy Garvey, widow of black-power icon, Marcus Garvey
- Coloured People's Progressive Association: president was Michael de Freitas; later in the 1960s would become known as Michael X



Restrictions on immigration

- Government response to the events in Notting Hill = appeasement towards the white population by seeking to restrict black immigration
- 1962: Commonwealth Immigrants Act = a retraction of the invitation offered by the 1948 Nationality Act
- Immigration Acts in 1969 and 1971: increasingly difficult for black immigrants to settle in the country
- Race relations legislation 1965 and 1968: designed to guard against discrimination BUT actually did more to galvanise and stimulate the rise of racism



FACE THE FACTS

IF YOU DESIRE A **COLOURED**
FOR YOUR NEIGHBOUR
VOTE LABOUR

IF YOU ARE ALREADY BURDONED
WITH ONE
VOTE TORY

The Conservatives once in Office, will bring
up to date the **Ministry of Repatriation**, to
Speed up the return of home-going and
expelled immigrants.



Lurch to the Right

- 'If you want a nigger neighbour vote Labour'
- ... Peter Smethwick's Tory platform in Smethwick, 1964, wins the seat from Labour in an election Labour decisively won elsewhere
- 20th April 1968: Tory MP Enoch Powell gave his now infamous 'rivers of blood' speech in Birmingham
- 1968: Commonwealth Immigrants Act restricts immigration from Kenyan Asians (excepting Kenyans with white skin)
- 1969-70: peak in incidents of sporadic, unproved attacks on Asians
- 1970: emergence and growth of Column 88 = militarist far-right organisation that undertook violent direct-action against immigrants and the organisations that supported them.



The National Front (NF)

- 1967: British National Party and League of Empire Loyalists merge to form a new group, the National Front
- Under John Tyndall's leadership from 1972, it concentrates on street protest and recruitment in East London and northern England
- NF campaigned largely on the policy of absolute controls on immigration and repatriation of all coloured immigrants
- Neo-Nazis: Only white people should be allowed citizenship of Britain
- Events like Ugandan Asian refugee crisis (1972) were capitalised on, with a peak in support in the mid-1970s



1970s Racism and Anti-Fascism

- 1970s; NF undertook many high-profile marches through racially sensitive areas.
- Readily and vehemently opposed by anti-fascist movements
- The Police (technically upholding democratic rights to protest) were heavily accused of (and appeared to be) defending the far-right racist policies of the marchers
- June 1976: murder of Gurdip Singh Chaggar in Southall
- May 1978: murder of Altab Ali near to Brick Lane in East London



Midweek Gazette

TUESDAY, MAY 3, 1977 01-567 2287 4p

'I am quite satisfied that neither of you was activated by feelings of racial prejudice. This was basically not a racial killing'— Mr. Justice Lawson

The killers of Chaggar get 4 years

By GARY GURMEET
from the
Old Bailey

THE teenage killers of Sikh student Gurdeep Chaggar have been jailed for four years by the Old Bailey.

Jody Hill, a 17-year-old clerk from Southall, and Robert Hackman, 18, had got involved in a scuffle between gangs of white and Asian youths in The Green, Southall last June. They both admitted manslaughter yesterday on the sixth day of the trial after previously pleading not guilty to murder. And the judge, Mr. Justice Neil Lawson told them: "If you were older you could go to prison for a very long time. I am quite satisfied that neither of you was activated by feelings of racial prejudice. This was basically not a racial killing."

The court had heard how Hill and Hackman, 18, had got involved in a scuffle between gangs of white and Asian youths in The Green, Southall last June. They both admitted manslaughter yesterday on the sixth day of the trial after previously pleading not guilty to murder. And the judge, Mr. Justice Neil Lawson told them: "If you were older you could go to prison for a very long time. I am quite satisfied that neither of you was activated by feelings of racial prejudice. This was basically not a racial killing."

He added: "There was no undercurrent of planned racial violence. Hill says he did not cause the fatal blow. Mr. Blotfield said Hill had probably drunk a bit too much at the disco. He added: "When the fight started he behaved not merely stupidly but criminally and has ended up in this court a very frightened young man. He is a likeable young man who needs to grow up a little. He is in no way influenced by racial prejudice." Detective Inspector Alec

Marsden said Hill had previous findings of guilt for theft and driving offences. He left school at 15 and worked at Heathrow. Mr. Piers Harris QC, defending Hackman, said the fact that the victim was coloured was incidental. He added: "There was no wish on Hackman's part to hurt a coloured boy. There was no anti-black or racial prejudice. Many of his friends at the time were coloured."



THE VICTIM... an exclusive picture of student Gurdeep Chaggar



THIS SCENE... The Victory pub in The Green, Southall, where Chaggar fell dying against the railings

Four days that shook Southall — the full story ONLY in Friday's Gazette

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