

THE WINDRUSH SCANDAL

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The Windrush scandal had a profound impact on Jamaicans and other individuals from the Caribbean who belonged to the Windrush generation. Many of them arrived in the UK as children or young adults between 1948 and 1971, responding to an invitation to aid in the country's post-World War II reconstruction. For my grandmother, who was only five years old at the time, this opportunity was presented as a chance for her family to create a better life in their "motherland." Regrettably, they could not have foreseen that this decision would have lasting repercussions, not only for them but also for their descendants. According to my aunt, who was born in the UK, my grandmother possessed indefinite leave to remain when my aunt was born. However, due to the scandal, crucial paperwork was concealed, preventing her from obtaining a passport.

Due to changes in immigration policies, many were wrongly classified as illegal immigrants and faced multiple challenges. As a further result of the scandal, Jamaicans and others from the Windrush generation experienced difficulties in accessing healthcare, employment, and housing. Some

were wrongfully detained, denied basic services, and even faced deportation threats. The scandal caused immense distress and uncertainty for individuals who had lived and contributed to the UK for decades. My auntie first faced difficulties when she "applied for [her] first passport when [she] was 16, to go on holiday with [her] friend. She recalls this as the first time "that [she] realised [she] was going to have problems getting it." The fight to get her passport didn't stop here, she "applied about six times and paid the money but never got the money back," their reasons for this, she claims "they said that [she] needed to get British citizenship despite it saying [she] was born in the UK on [her] birth certificate."

In 2018 I remember this being heavily talked about "Even on the news they spoke about it, now it's done! but people suffered, people got deported back to their countries "and many that were affected lost hope in a country they believed was their home for decades. My auntie recalls a moment she lost all hope "and thought [she] might as well get a Guyanese passport despite never having lived there because [she] thought it would be easier."

Her dad died when she was 10 and the fact, she wasn't eligible to get hold of a British passport inhibited her from going overseas to visit her Nan that was unwell. She only got to meet with her Nan "once when [she] was 10" and can think back to many moments when " [she] wanted to always go visit her but couldn't." The Windrush scandal undoubtedly had a profound and far-reaching impact on Jamaicans and their families, including me and my close relatives. It served as a stark reminder of the urgent need for equitable and just immigration policies that honour the contributions and rights of individuals who have established their lives in the UK. My auntie's belief in the ongoing fight for change and the importance of educating both the government and the public about the true extent of the scandal is commendable.

"HOWEVER, DUE TO THE SCANDAL, CRUCIAL PAPERWORK WAS CONCEALED, PREVENTING HER FROM OBTAINING A PASSPORT."

The media coverage in 2018 shed light on the issue, but the suffering and wrongful deportations experienced by those affected cannot be

overlooked or easily forgotten. It is disheartening to hear that many lost hope in a country they considered their home for decades. The personal story of my auntie longing to visit her unwell Nan, hindered by the inability to obtain a British passport, underscores the profound impact of these policies on individual lives and

she first received racism." It was there she remembers "just being called the n word by people, continuously." In comparison to her past experiences the racism her children face is much more overt and prominent. When her "son went to a local football academy for training the first day after his session [she] got called over and was told that, there had

at your skin, it's black!' The incidents for my auntie sadly don't stop there, because "at school one of [her] other sons has been called the n word, and after the incident the mum was crying claiming she didn't know where he learned it from." With that said the incidents don't end at children, she talked about a recent case with a parent in the after-school playground, that when in conversation with her thought it was okay to say "you're alright you are, I didn't really talk to black people before." This further proves that acts of prejudice don't stop at innocent children that don't fully comprehend the repercussions of their actions, but for some adults they suffer this same issue.

"OVER TIME, THE INTRODUCTION OF 'HOSTILE' IMMIGRATION POLICIES AND A LACK OF PROPER DOCUMENTATION CAUSED MANY OF THEM TO FACE MISTREATMENT AND DISCRIMINATION."

Source: Tilbury Bridge Walkway of Memories Exhibition (Evewright Arts)



familial connections. When the Windrush generation immigrants arrived in the UK, they were initially welcomed and encouraged to help rebuild the country after World War II. They were given the right to live and work in the UK indefinitely. However, over time, the introduction of 'hostile' immigration policies and a lack of proper documentation caused many of them to face mistreatment and discrimination.

For my auntie growing up in the UK, was less racist from her experience, than it is now. When she lived "in Lewisham" she deemed it to be "quite diverse," but it was only when she "moved to Abbey Wood that

been a bit of an incident where a boy had discriminated against [her] son." What had happened was her "son had tackled the ball off of a boy and he clearly didn't like it," so he said 'you're different from all of us, look



Source: Tilbury Bridge Walkway of Memories Exhibition (Evewright Arts)



Source: Entrance to Tilbury Bridge Walkway of Memories (Evewright Arts)

It's truly disheartening to hear about the distressing experiences of racism that my auntie and her children have encountered. Despite the strides made in societal progress, it is unfortunate that manifestations of racism continue to persist in various forms. It is imperative that we address these incidents and foster a climate of education and empathy to counteract the prevailing ignorance.

Racism should never find a place in our society, particularly when it infringes upon the innocent endeavours of children engaging in activities such as football or pursuing their education. It is crucial for our community to unite and actively strive towards cultivating an environment that embraces inclusivity and acceptance for all.

The Windrush scandal, a distressing revelation of injustice, elicited widespread public outrage. In response, the UK government issued formal apologies, initiated a comprehensive review of immigration policies, and established the Windrush Compensation Scheme to provide financial redress to those affected.

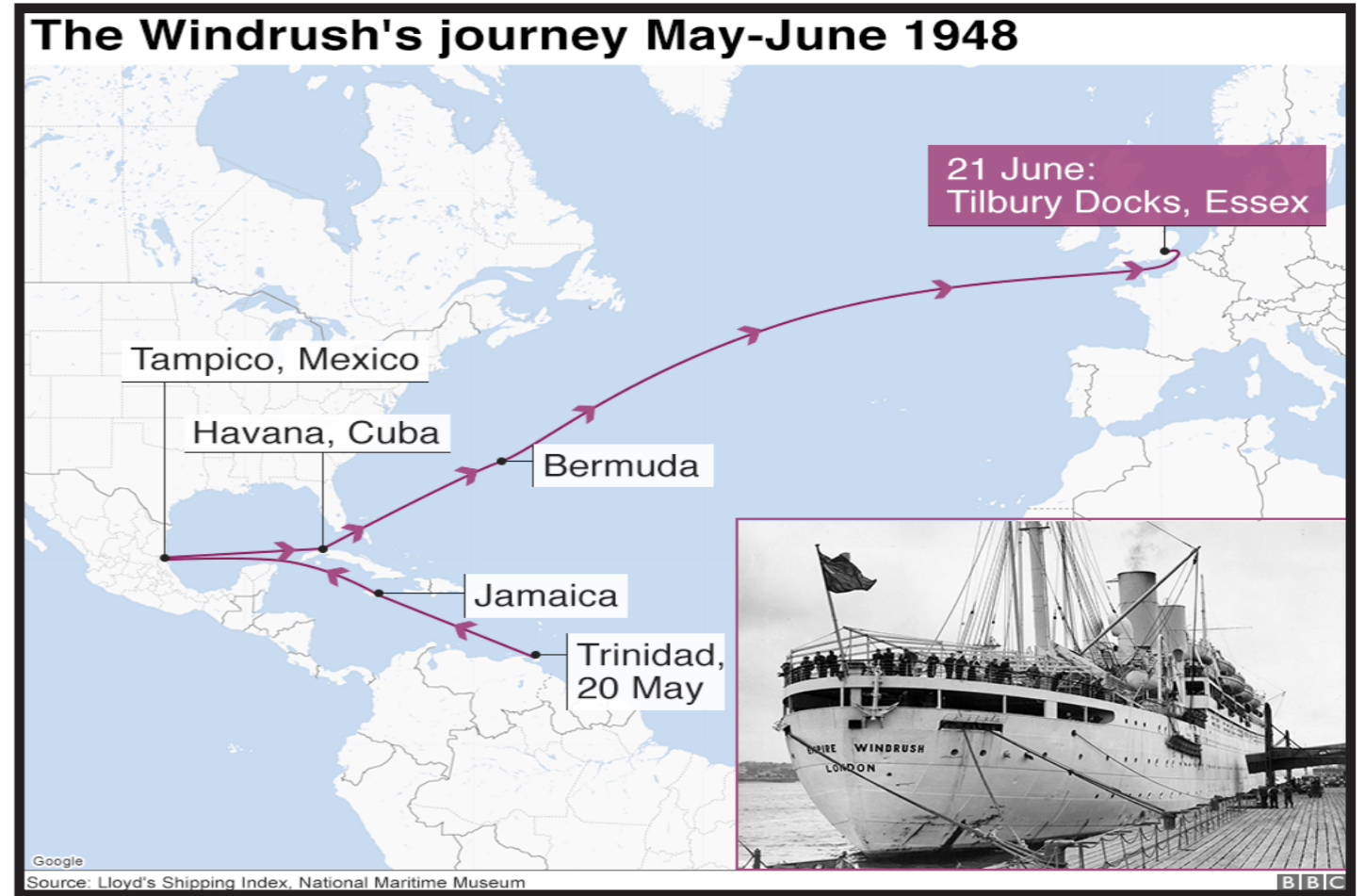
For my British-born auntie, the denial of a passport had far-reaching consequences, leading to an existential crisis surrounding her identity. The impact extended beyond the inability to embark on holidays; it tragically prevented her from bidding a final farewell to her Nan and participating in the funeral rites. The grief experienced by affected families cannot be masked by monetary compensation

alone, as the emotional toll and the missed milestones are immeasurable. It is imperative that we continue advocating for systemic change and fostering an inclusive society that values and respects the identities of all individuals, regardless of their place of birth. It is important to recognise and address the mistreatment that the Windrush generation immigrants faced, and to work towards creating a more inclusive and equitable society for all!

- WERE YOU AWARE OF THE WINDRUSH SCANDAL BEFORE READING THIS ARTICLE?

- DO YOU THINK THAT GOVERNMENT 'HOSTILE' IMMIGRATION POLICIES ARE PARTLY RESPONSIBLE FOR RACISM IN WIDER SOCIETY?

- IS THE SUPPORT THAT WAS GIVEN AFTER THE WINDRUSH SCANDAL, IN TERMS OF FOR EXAMPLE LARGE SUMS OF MONEY AS COMPENSATION, ENOUGH FOR THE DISTRESS AND HEARTACHE CAUSED?



Source: Lloyd's shipping index, BBC News Windrush Journey

Use this area to write down any thoughts or questions that are raised whilst reading this article
