

Reflections on Windrush

by members of
the Caribbean Social Forum

**WINDRUSH
DAY**

Introduction

The Caribbean Social Forum members have been working with the National Maritime Museum for the last six years as critical friends, collaborators and community curators. They have a wealth of expertise and experience not only through their professional work experience but also through their lived experience of living in Britain with Caribbean heritage. Many members are descendants of those who travelled to the UK from the Caribbean on the HM Windrush or other vessels that came to the UK from the Caribbean around the same time. Some members themselves travelled on Windrush, and all have witnessed and experienced the challenges and opportunities that being of Caribbean heritage in the UK poses.

Caribbean Social Forum combats social isolation and promotes well-being among the over 50s through educational talks, dancing, music, singing, news and discussion groups and writing.

This anthology showcases the reflections of members of the Caribbean Social Forum on the resilience, dreams and legacy of the Windrush generation.

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What the Windrush generation means to me

There is no question that the members of the Windrush generation are British. In all circumstances and situations they should be treated as first class British Citizens and any other treatment is wholly unacceptable

By Cynthia GB

Personally it means a great deal. I arrived in the UK on 14.04.1967. I 'was a bright young thing' in the need of the right opportunity. I might have had an education had I remained in Jamaica. The thing is, I don't know. What I know is, I went to night classes and then to college. It would have been a waste of a capable soul had I not been given this opportunity. I might have done a right in Jamaica. I might even have done better. What I do know is, I was given a chance and I took it. It would have been the worse had I not been given this opportunity. Windrush is the life I have, the life I have been able to afford my children and the many people I have used my blessings to bless.

By Zane G



500. 500. 500

That is the amount of Caribbean people who travelled the 4,579 miles to the Tilbury Docks in Essex.

When? 1948. Yet, 70 years later the Windrush babies nationality as members of the Commonwealth was negated. Yes, I mean 'babies'. Babies don't know fear, are completely innocence, are excited by new experiences. That is how they came, with eyes wide open. What a shock when their 'MOTHER' country rejected them. Miraculously, they thrived in such hostile environments; settled, had careers, had children, had new lives. I am the result of that brave new journey and acknowledge them everyday for their fortitude, resilience and courage. Thank you.

By Jackie B

Windrush Era

I'm proud my parents and all other parents who were enticed to England in the fifties under false promises. They had a hard life helping to rebuild this country and brining up families. I am so grateful to them for giving me the life I have now.

By Joan

The Windrush

The wind rush is the homing pigeon taking flight but not sure of the journey

The wind rush is the 5 Year plan but uncertainty looms large

The wind rush is a group of people bound by a common set of values, instilled in them from the motherland.

The wind rush is the expected welcome but the reality proved different

The wind rush is the feeling that now you have done your dues, it's time to go!

The wind rush is no papers, possessions for all the toiling years

The windrush's legacy is here, but who wants to claim that burden...

By Velmar



The Rolling pin

Hands clasped around the two protruding knobs

Flattening out the rough dough to bake the sweet smelling pies

In my hand I hold a lethal weapon ready to pounce

What will I do if I catch him?

He's safe now running around the furniture

Coved-19 or coronavirus whatever you're called, leave my head and allow Sweet thoughts in

What are you telling people to do?

NO!

Who else feel/imagine what I'm planning to do?

Being cooped up plays tricks on you...

Stop! I jolt back to my senses

What was I going to do with the rolling pin?

God alone knows.

By Velmar



The motherland is calling
Come come come
Help us build our Empire
Food and wealth is here for some

The palm tree wind is blowing towards my face
Rushing around to aid the Motherlands feels like
a solace race
Come come come is what I hear
Beneath the smiles there's silent fear

Aboard the Windrush hear I come
Although tired and hungry
It still feels fun
In the distance the motherland becomes clear
Time to vacate the vessel now I begin to fear

Where is my food, where is our wealth
Where is my home?
Reality and sadness is plain to see
Our dreams and hopes never followed me.

At times I lay in bed the silent tears poured
The only thing that got me through was the
continued faith in my lord

By Jocelyn W



Windrush Appreciation

I was a fully grown mature woman before I even began to appreciate what it meant to be a first generation Windrush daughter.

My father arrived in England in the 1950's leaving behind his wife and children in the hopes of making huge sums of money to enable him to return to Jamaica in the allotted five years, bestowed upon him by the United Kingdom; the then rulers and guardians of the beautiful island. Having experienced farm working in the United States, I imagine he thought that as the UK made the call to the West Indies to come and rebuild parts of broken England, he would be made welcome and become part of a thriving community.

My mother told me that she felt his shame when he told her that after the allotted five years, he had not even begun to achieve all he had set out to do. Home sick and lonely he begged her to join him and leave the children with their grand parents and god parents to give themselves another five years to capture hold onto the elusive British pound and at the same time honour his pledge to make Britain great again.

Whilst the decades rolled on my mother made it her life's work to ensure that the children born at home and the children born abroad remained loved, valued and united and to the best of her ability, made sure that the children were all given equal opportunities to succeed in life. A mammoth task. Imagine trying to blend two cultures under the harsh conditions of which England very quickly became.

Fast forward to my life. Could I imagine:

- the horror of living in a hostile environment of overt and covert racism
- leaving all I had known to travel thousands of miles away from home, as someone in my prime and then be relegated to a third or fourth class citizen
- struggling to make a success of my life with largely no support
- working in establishments that did not reflect how hard I had worked to achieve what I already had back home
- not being offered basic respect and good manners whilst seeking at maintaining work and accommodation
- unfamiliar food
- weather at polar opposites to what I knew
- homesickness like no other

Mum, dad and all the original Windrush trail blazers, I salute you and honour you in a way you can never even begin to imagine.

May your unfair, undeserved racist treatment and degradation, be a constant reminder to the British Government and all who call themselves human, until every single wrong has been acknowledged and corrected.

May we, the coming generations of our Windrush warriors hold onto our teachings, values, pride and resilience.

Written and dedicated with love, respect and true admiration.

Yours ever, a daughter from the first generation of the Windrush pioneers.

By Jenny S





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