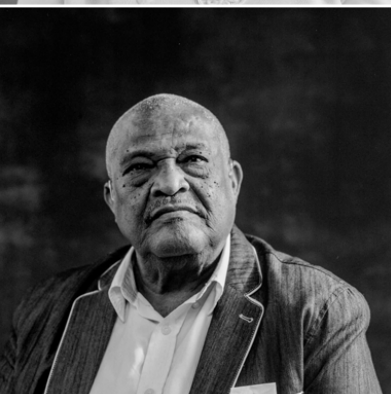
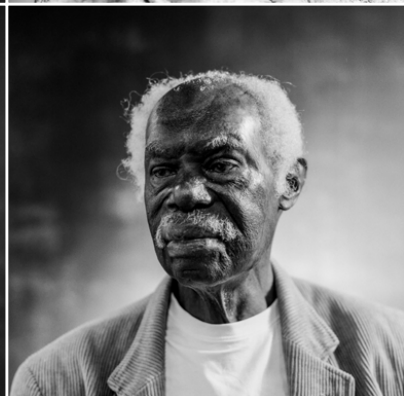
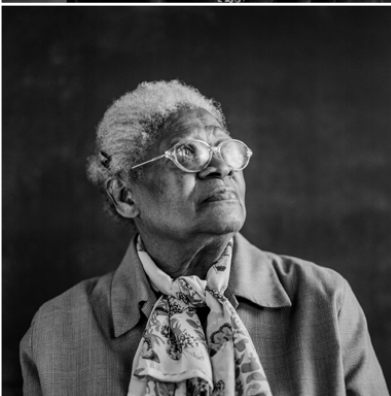




STORIES OF
WINDRUSH



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Shown in the image: Veronica Larrier



Foreword

Diane Abbott MP

You could play an exercise in word association with the word 'Windrush'. Some might follow it with scandal, others could opt for generation, others still, who have no sympathy or understanding for the migrant experience might choose something unprintable. But, while the first two associated words are perfectly valid, I think it would be a mistake if we did not also include 'celebration' too.

Because for all those who form part of the Windrush generation, and many who have been subject to scandalous impositions by state agencies, we must not forget that their lives, their struggles, their achievements and their legacy are worth celebrating.

This is about people's lives first and foremost. People like my parents who came here as part of the great adventure when what was called the Mother Country invited them to come and help with post-World War Two reconstruction.

Of course they did not arrive on the SS Windrush itself. It is a widespread error to narrow a whole generation down to one set of passengers. No, they were part of the whole wave of migrants from the Caribbean, economic migrants who came looking for a new life and better opportunities than were available at home.

My mother's story in particular is almost a stereotype. But what a stereotype! She devoted the rest of her working life to the NHS, helping building the institution in this country that everyone is most proud of.

But others contributed in all sorts of ways, eventually as teachers and doctors, carers, engineers, labourers and small business owners. Each of them trying to make a living, trying to adjust to cold, damp Britain. And each of them never forgetting where they came from, often talking about going home, always retaining and then developing our culture, our food, our music, our artistic achievements.

Those remaining with us are elders now. Many have children, grand-children and maybe even great grand-children born here, who have also had to adjust to being the daughters and sons of migrants, not always treated fairly.

Yet we will always have what is unique to us and our experience. We will always have the Windrush legacy.

Foreword

Paul Anderson MBE CEO

As the founder of Voyage, I am deeply proud and grateful to introduce the Hackney Windrush Elders Project. This initiative is a labour of love, celebrating the essence, spirit, and enduring legacy of Hackney's Windrush generation. It has been a profound honour to work alongside three incredible Hackney-based Caribbean Lunch Clubs and engage with over 60 elders who generously shared their unique stories and memories.

We are thrilled to have secured 29 full stories, 38 audio recordings without images, and over 45 individual photographs from elders, including those captured during our delightful Garden Tea Party and follow-up events. These invaluable contributions form the heart of this project, reflecting the rich tapestry of experiences and journeys of resistance, love and belonging.

This work would not have been possible without the extraordinary support of Hackney CVS (HCVS), the dedicated Caribbean Lunch Club coordinators and managers, and our committed heritage, technical, and creative partners. I especially want to thank our young Heritage Ambassadors, whose energy and dedication have been instrumental in bringing these stories to life and ensuring they resonate with future generations.

We have strived to honour every voice in this book. For those who shared brief insights, we have creatively represented their themes in a word cloud. Elders who provided only an image are acknowledged with a dedicated listing. To preserve the depth of their stories, original recordings are available on our website via QR codes included in this book, allowing you to delve further into these remarkable contributions.

The Hackney Windrush Elders Project stands as a profound tribute to the courage,

resilience, and immeasurable contributions of our elders. Their lives tell stories of triumph and challenge, marked by profound sacrifice and unwavering determination in the face of racism, marginalisation, and a society that too often failed to recognise their worth.

Many of these individuals arrived in Britain as unaccompanied children, embarking on life-changing journeys to meet relatives, parents, aunts, or uncles which they scarcely knew. Others came as adults, driven by ambition and a "five-year plan" to work hard, save, and return home, only to find themselves planting deep roots and becoming UK citizens. Yet even as they helped rebuild and enrich British society, they faced persistent obstacles and indignities.

Their narratives remind us not only of the injustices they endured but of the strength and dignity with which they overcame them. These stories are far more than historical accounts, they are enduring lessons for the present and blueprints for the future. They highlight the ongoing fight for equality, the necessity of valuing every community, and the resilience and resistance needed to create a fairer, more inclusive society.

As you engage with these extraordinary journeys, I encourage you to reflect deeply on the enduring legacy of the Windrush generation. Their voices demand to be heard, their sacrifices honoured, and their achievements celebrated. Let their stories inspire us to work tirelessly for a world where every person is treated with dignity, respect, and equality.

With deepest respect and admiration,
Paul Anderson MBE

Echoes of Resilience

The Untold Windrush Story

Alexander De Great

The Windrush Generation holds an irreplaceable place in the fabric of British history, shaping communities and contributing immeasurably to the social, economic, and cultural landscape of the UK. With their arrival from the Caribbean between the late 1940s and the 1970s, these pioneers carried dreams of opportunity and the hope of building better lives, not only for themselves but for generations to come. However, as the years pass, many of these elders are now reaching advanced ages, and there is a palpable urgency to preserve their stories before they are lost to time. Their lived experiences are rich with lessons of resilience, hope, and determination, values that resonate deeply and have the potential to guide and strengthen our communities today.

The Caribbean lunch clubs in Hackney are much more than places where elders come to share a meal, they are vibrant hubs of connection and storytelling, where bonds forged over decades are nurtured and cherished. These clubs stand as lifelines, providing elders with a sense of belonging and continuity amidst a society that often overlooks them. Here, the warmth of shared heritage

and the camaraderie of familiar faces create an environment where memories flourish and stories are exchanged. For these reasons, Voyage recognised the invaluable role these spaces play and sought to connect with them to capture the stories of the elders who have done so much to shape life in Hackney and beyond.

Attending the lunch clubs offers the elders far more than nourishment, it offers them community, support, and a platform for sharing their legacy. The clubs serve as vital touch points, where elders meet with friends who share not only their experiences of migration but also the rich cultural traditions from the islands they call home. These bonds often transcend national identities, stitching together a patchwork of shared Caribbean heritage. Within these spaces, elders find solace and joy, bolstered by the presence of health and well-being specialists and guest contributors who add to the nurturing environment.

The importance of preserving the voices of these elders cannot be overstated. Their narratives hold



Tabago Caruso

the keys to understanding how our communities came to be and highlight the enduring strength they carried while facing discrimination, economic hardship, and the challenges of assimilation. Each story encapsulates moments of triumph and struggle, detailing how they carved out spaces of belonging and laid down the roots for future generations. In capturing these stories, we do more than just preserve history, we honour their sacrifices and celebrate their contributions, embedding them into the collective memory so that future generations can learn from them and feel inspired by their legacy.

Voyage's decision to build on its 2019 Windrush Elders Project in Haringey, which successfully compiled the stories of 12 elders into a cherished book, marked an essential step in expanding this legacy to Hackney. By focusing on Hackney's Caribbean lunch clubs, we aimed to create a platform where elders would feel safe, valued, and supported in sharing their experiences. The lunch clubs, with their welcoming atmosphere and history of community support, became the perfect venue for these intimate conversations.

These clubs are places where laughter echoes, stories unfold, and memories are kept alive. Here, elders are surrounded by peers who can relate to their journeys, journeys that began with hope aboard ships like the Empire Windrush and continued with building new lives in a foreign land. The elders' experiences are not just historical anecdotes, they are powerful accounts that shape our understanding of identity, community, and resilience. Their voices remind us of the courage it took to rebuild homes and lives in the face of adversity and how these foundational experiences continue to impact society today.

The Hackney Windrush Project, therefore, became more than a documentation effort, it became a commitment to ensuring that the voices of the Windrush Generation remain alive and accessible, preserving a collective heritage that still resonates within our communities. Through this project, we hope not only to highlight their invaluable contributions but also to weave their wisdom into the future, creating a lasting memory that honours the past, enriches the present, and guides future generations.



Igniting Change

The Roots and Rationale Behind the Windrush Project

Voyage's mission has always been to uplift, empower, and provide meaningful opportunities to young people from low socio-economic and BAME (Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic) backgrounds. Since its founding in 1998, Voyage has carved out a reputation for impactful community work, creating strong partnerships with influential bodies such as the National Black Police Association and the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime. However, the events of recent years catalysed a deeper transformation within the organisation, shifting its focus to amplify the voices of young people while connecting them to the heritage of their communities in more profound and lasting ways.

The global surge of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement in 2020 was a watershed moment, awakening society to the systemic injustices faced by Black communities. This surge did not just amplify calls for justice, it stirred organisations and individuals alike to re-evaluate their roles in creating an equitable society. For Voyage, BLM was not only a moment of reckoning but an opportunity for renewed purpose. The movement boosted the visibility and urgency of Voyage's work, leading to collaborations

with City of London companies and national cultural, creative, and environmental organisations. These partnerships aimed to cement the role of young people as active participants in shaping policies, practices, and cultural narratives.

The heightened interest following BLM, paired with the expansion of Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) policies, propelled the formation of Voyage's Ambassador Teams. These teams were designed as platforms for ambitious young individuals to engage directly with policy-making, campaign for social change, and contribute to practices that could improve Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) across multiple sectors. The ambition was clear: to transform these young people into leaders who could challenge the status quo and bring forth a wave of progress not only in corporate settings but also in wider community development.

This framework of activism and heritage exploration naturally aligned with Voyage's decision to pursue a new Windrush Project focused on Hackney. The decision was fuelled by the stark recognition of an urgent issue: the risk of losing the stories and

legacies of the Windrush Generation. While these elders were foundational in shaping British society, their invaluable contributions and sacrifices were under-recognised and, in some cases, deliberately undermined.

One of the most distressing chapters in this context was the hostile environment policy initiated by then-Prime Minister Theresa May in 2012. Presented under the guise of enforcing stricter immigration controls, this policy targeted undocumented immigrants and created an atmosphere of fear and uncertainty for countless African and Caribbean individuals who had called the UK home for decades. The impact was devastating, elders who had arrived legally as part of the Windrush Generation suddenly found themselves without adequate documentation, faced with deportation to islands that, while once familiar, now felt alien, disconnected, and devoid of familial ties. The policy was a stark reminder of how easily the pioneering contributions of the Windrush Generation could be overlooked, reduced to mere numbers in an immigration system.

Voyage saw this injustice as a call to action. It was imperative to create a space where the stories of the Windrush elders could be shared, celebrated, and preserved, stories that spoke not only of their arrival and struggles but of their indomitable spirit in building a new life from the ground up. The voices of these elders encapsulate more than just historical anecdotes, they reveal the essence of perseverance, community solidarity, and the pursuit of hope amidst systemic challenges. Capturing these voices would ensure that their experiences were not forgotten, but rather cherished and learned from to inspire future generations.

This project was not just about the elders, it was an opportunity for young people to engage in heritage work, gain paid work experience, and connect with narratives that, while perhaps not their own, echoed familiar themes of migration, resilience, and identity. By forming Heritage Ambassador Teams, Voyage sought to equip these young leaders with the skills needed for meaningful contribution, not only to heritage projects but to initiatives that could bridge gaps in understanding across generations and backgrounds.

Voyage's past collaborations, such as with the Museum of the Home on the reinterpretation of the Robert Geffrye statue, had already shown the organisation's commitment to rethinking history and empowering young voices to question and shape narratives. The success of these initiatives underscored the importance of including diverse voices in the heritage sector, a space that remains predominantly white. The

involvement of youth in these projects opens doors not just for storytelling but for transforming how history is curated and celebrated.

By focusing on the Hackney Windrush Project, Voyage aimed to continue this momentum. This was not just a project but a mission to capture stories in spaces where elders felt safe and valued - the Caribbean lunch clubs of Hackney. These clubs, brimming with memories and camaraderie, were chosen as the heart of the project because they represented continuity, trust, and an enduring sense of home. The stories shared in these rooms were filled with laughter, tears, and shared glances that spoke volumes. They were the stories of those who had laid the foundations for the multicultural society we know today.

In bringing these stories to life through the Windrush book, Voyage hoped to create a lasting tribute to a generation that endured and thrived despite immense challenges. It was a project driven by a passion for justice, a desire to capture the irreplaceable wisdom of elders, and a commitment to fostering connections between generations. Through this work, Voyage continues to honour the Windrush Generation, ensuring their voices echo across time and serve as a beacon of resilience and hope for all.



Training the Next Generation - Preparing Youth Ambassadors for the Journey

Voyage's dedication to fostering growth and creating opportunities for young people was exemplified in the development and execution of the Hackney Windrush Project. Recognising the profound importance of documenting the stories of our elders, Voyage took a strategic and detailed approach to prepare a select group of young individuals who would serve as Heritage Ambassadors. This was more than just a project, it was a journey of learning, empathy, and discovery.

To begin this transformative journey, Voyage designed an in-depth recruitment brief aimed at attracting enthusiastic candidates. The response was overwhelming – out of the expansive network of young people engaged in Voyage's multi-layered programmes, 36 applicants aged 16 to 21 expressed their desire to be part of this meaningful initiative. After a rigorous short-listing process, 16 young ambassadors were chosen, each bringing a unique perspective and a shared commitment to honouring the legacy of the Windrush Generation.



Equipping Ambassadors with Knowledge and Sensitivity

The first step in the preparation was to ensure that the young ambassadors were well-equipped to handle the delicate and respectful task of documenting the stories of elders. To support this, a robust and vibrant training programme was designed, overseen by a dedicated tutor. This programme aimed to provide a rich foundation of knowledge and practical skills, ensuring that the youth felt confident and competent as they embarked on their journey.

The training curriculum was comprehensive, covering a wide range of critical areas. The young people engaged in learning about Caribbean history and British colonial and post-colonial narratives, gaining an understanding of the socio-political context that framed the experiences of the Windrush Generation. This historical grounding was crucial for them to appreciate the stories they were about to hear and document, providing the context necessary to empathise with and relate to the elders' accounts.

Additionally, training in archival practices such as accessioning was included to familiarise the young ambassadors with methods of preserving and organising historical materials. This practical skill set was invaluable for creating a resource that would not only capture stories but maintain them as part of a heritage archive that future generations could access and learn from.

Building Empathy and Awareness

Understanding that the process of gathering oral histories from elderly individuals required not only technical skills but also emotional intelligence, Voyage incorporated training sessions focused on dementia awareness, mental health considerations, and mobility needs. This aspect of the training was essential for the ambassadors to approach their work with sensitivity and respect, ensuring they could adapt to the unique challenges that might arise during interviews. It instilled a compassionate approach, preparing the young people to be patient listeners and supportive companions to the elders as they shared personal and sometimes emotional stories.

These educational components were coupled with practical exercises. Young ambassadors were given digital recording devices and tasked with practising at home by interviewing their parents. This exercise proved unexpectedly enriching, many of the youth discovered stories they had never heard before, fostering new dialogues within their own families and enhancing their appreciation for oral history as a powerful medium of connection and discovery.

Expert Guidance The Influence of Dr Tola Dabiri

Voyage further enriched the learning experience by inviting Dr Tola Dabiri, an expert in oral history and cultural projects, to share her invaluable insights. With her extensive experience, Tola provided guidance on how to create a comfortable environment for interviewees, stressing the importance of empathy, active listening, and building trust. Her expertise in oral history practices reinforced the importance of capturing authentic and meaningful stories while being mindful of the emotional landscapes these narratives might traverse.

Tola's involvement underscored the importance of making the elders feel seen and valued during the interview process, empowering the young ambassadors with both the confidence and the technique needed to carry out their roles with professionalism and compassion.



Dr Tola Dabiri



A New Chapter of Learning and Reflection

The combination of historical education, practical training, and expert mentorship ensured that Voyage's Heritage Ambassadors were not only prepared to conduct interviews but were also imbued with a deep respect for the Windrush Generation's contributions. This preparation fostered a new generation of community historians who understood the value of listening, preserving, and learning from the past.

Through this immersive training process, the young ambassadors developed a personal and collective commitment to ensuring that the voices of the elders would be remembered. This project was about more than documenting stories, it was about creating a bridge between generations, reinforcing community ties, and instilling in young people a sense of responsibility toward their shared heritage.

As they embarked on this journey, the young ambassadors were not just participants in a project but stewards of a legacy, tasked with capturing stories that would continue to resonate and inspire for years to come. Their work would ensure that the stories of the Windrush elders which are full of resilience, hope, and hard-won achievements, would not be lost to time but would instead be celebrated as part of the fabric of British history.



Introducing Hackney's Caribbean Lunch Clubs

At the heart of Hackney's community lie its vibrant Caribbean lunch clubs, which serve as vital meeting places where elders come together to share stories, connect with their heritage, and support one another. These clubs are more than social hubs, they are places that embody resilience, tradition, and the warmth of a generation that laid the groundwork for future communities. Engaging with these lunch clubs was an essential step in Voyage's mission to document and preserve the stories of the Windrush Generation, but it came with its challenges.

Past experiences with young volunteers had left some elders disillusioned, perceiving the younger generation as disengaged and inattentive, often more focused on their mobile phones than on meaningful interaction. Recognising this, Voyage CEO Paul Anderson MBE knew that winning the trust of the elders would require thoughtful preparation and a genuine commitment. Paul personally visited each of the three main lunch clubs to introduce the project: Hackney Caribbean Elderly Organisation (HCEO), Holly Street Luncheon & Social Club, and Chatsworth Road Methodist Over 60 Plus Luncheon Club. His approach was direct and reassuring, aimed at building trust and addressing any scepticism head-on.



The Initial Engagement Process

Paul's visits were an opportunity to outline the aims of the project and explain the comprehensive training that Voyage's young ambassadors would undergo. He assured the elders and the lunch club coordinators that these young people would not be typical volunteers. They would be trained in respect, sensitivity, and the necessary skills to engage meaningfully. Paul explained that the young ambassadors would participate in activities at the lunch clubs, helping with tasks such as setting up meals, arranging tables, and assisting with games. This commitment was not only to ensure the elders' comfort but to demonstrate that the younger generation could be attentive, helpful, and genuinely invested in their stories.

The response from the elders and club coordinators was cautious but intrigued. Their participation would not be instantaneous, it required proof of the young ambassadors' dedication. To pave the way for this involvement, Voyage structured a six-week programme where the young people rotated among the lunch clubs in teams of four to six. This gradual immersion allowed the elders to become familiar with their presence and see first-hand the young people's efforts to engage meaningfully and respectfully.

A Pathway to Deeper Connection

Understanding that building trust would take time, the six-week integration period was designed to create authentic relationships. During this time, the young ambassadors showed their commitment by performing small but significant acts: assisting with meal preparation, participating in activities, and checking in to ensure everyone was comfortable. These gestures began to shift the initial wariness into warmth and acceptance.

As part of this introductory phase, Paul also shared the long-term vision for the project with the elders and lunch club coordinators. He spoke about plans for a shared seaside trip during the summer, designed to deepen bonds and create shared memories between the young ambassadors and the elders. This idea was met with enthusiasm, especially when the elders were invited to suggest which seaside location they would prefer to visit. This inclusion empowered the elders, allowing them to shape the experience and see themselves as integral partners in the project.

Paul also outlined a future celebration event planned to take place at the Museum of the Home. He described this as a space where their stories would be captured and honoured through portraiture and oral histories, showcasing their incredible journeys and contributions. This was part of the trust-building process, illustrating the importance of the project and demonstrating that it was a sincere effort to document and cherish their legacy.





A Collaborative Start

With the groundwork laid, the project was set in motion, supported by coordinators like Lullynn and Paulette at HCEO, Nerine O'Connor at Holly Street, and Velma Bramble at Chatsworth Road. These key figures helped ensure that the young ambassadors were welcomed and guided in their roles. The project's success depended on this collaboration, which fostered an environment of mutual respect and shared purpose.

The elders' agreement to participate was not simply about recounting their stories; it was about reclaiming trust and building intergenerational bridges. This marked the beginning of a powerful journey – a testament to the potential of community, understanding, and the shared value of preserving history.

Bridging Connections Seaside Visit and Black Cultural Archives Experience

To enrich the connections between generations and set a foundation for the oral history documentation, two pivotal events were organised – a visit to the Black Cultural Archives (BCA) and a shared seaside trip to Hastings. These experiences proved transformative, offering unique opportunities for learning, bonding, and fostering trust. They served to deepen the understanding of the historical and personal narratives that would later become the heart of the project.



Visit to the Black Cultural Archives (BCA)

The journey began with a visit to the Black Cultural Archives in Brixton, the UK's foremost institution dedicated to preserving and celebrating the heritage of the African and Caribbean diaspora. This immersive experience provided the young Voyage Heritage Ambassadors with invaluable context about the lived experiences of the Windrush Generation and their descendants. The BCA showcased the profound impact of racism on migrant communities from the 1940s onwards, highlighting stories of resilience, activism, and cultural contribution that shaped the fabric of British society.



Through the BCA's curated exhibits and extensive resources, the young people developed a deeper understanding of the historical backdrop against which the Windrush Generation forged their lives in the UK. This exploration underscored the struggles and systemic barriers faced by the community and illuminated the powerful narratives of triumph and solidarity that emerged. The day included interactive elements where the young ambassadors engaged in documenting their experiences through vlogs, blogs, photography, and poetry. Sharing these reflections on social media helped amplify their new-found insights and foster community awareness.

The experience at the BCA also enriched the young people's preparation for conducting oral history interviews. By learning how stories were preserved and presented within the archival context, they gained practical skills and a nuanced perspective that informed how they would frame questions and interact with the elders.





Trip to Hastings Seaside

Following weeks of relationship-building at the lunch clubs, the next step was a community-focused day trip to Hastings. This excursion was designed not just as a leisure outing but as a means to deepen the bonds between the young ambassadors and the elders. The anticipation for this event was palpable, evidenced by the elders arriving earlier than expected, eager to embark on the adventure. Despite a minor setback

with a non-functioning air conditioner, the shared excitement and camaraderie prevailed.

The trip served multiple purposes. For many elders, opportunities for outings had become rare, making this seaside visit a cherished experience. Sharing a day filled with conversation, laughter, and mutual support allowed the young people and elders to engage in a relaxed, joyful environment. The proximity of Hastings Museum and Art Gallery added a meaningful layer to the day, providing an opportunity to explore exhibits that connected local histories with those of the Caribbean diaspora.

A notable contributor to the trip's success was Claudine Eccleston and her organisation, Playing the Race Card, which aligned with Voyage's goals by fostering understanding and documenting the Black British experience through art and activism. Her involvement exemplified how creative and community-based initiatives could interweave with historical education, further supporting the young ambassadors in their mission.



Progressing to Oral History Documentation

These two pivotal experiences – the insightful visit to the BCA and the shared day at Hastings – laid the groundwork for the next stage of the project: conducting oral history interviews. The young ambassadors, now equipped with a rich background in historical context and strengthened relationships with the elders, were prepared to sensitively and respectfully capture their stories. Ensuring that every elder felt comfortable and consented to be interviewed was paramount, and these events created the trust necessary for this crucial phase.

The strategic blend of cultural education and personal connection fostered a space where stories could be shared, preserved, and celebrated, honouring the Windrush Generation and ensuring their legacy continues to inspire future generations.



Celebration Event A Garden Tea Party at the Museum of the Home

After months of training, support sessions, interviews, and invaluable exchanges between the young people and the elders, we were finally at the stage of bringing it all together to celebrate the success of the project. The culmination of our efforts was the Garden Tea Party Event held on 22nd August at the Museum of the Home in East London, a venue steeped in history and culture, making it the perfect backdrop for what became an unforgettable day.



Creating a Space for Celebration and Connection

The event, designed as a Garden Tea Party, was more than just an afternoon of food, music, and reconnecting. It was an opportunity for the elders to sit back, relax, and participate in an amazing programme that celebrated their stories while also highlighting their contributions to the wider community. The relaxed nature of the event allowed elders to feel comfortable and valued, as they were surrounded by the love and attention of the young people, cultural leaders, and the broader community.

Special, personalised invitations were sent out to all of the elders, making sure they felt included, important, and celebrated for the unique lives they've lived. The event was designed to showcase just how much they were respected and cherished, ensuring they understood the true significance of their contributions to the community and to the lives of the younger generation.



Capturing Stories and Portraits, A Unified Effort

At the heart of the event was the process of capturing the elders' stories. In preparation, the Heritage Ambassadors played a key role in setting up recording booths where elders could sit down, reflect, and be interviewed. The booths provided a quiet, comfortable space where each elder could share their experiences, memories, and reflections, contributing to the oral history element of the project. This set the stage for capturing their stories in a way that felt personal, meaningful, and respectful.

Alongside the recording booths, Myah Asher Jeffers, our gifted photographer-in-residence, was on hand to document the event through her striking portraiture. Myah's choice to use black-and-white photography allowed the portraits to capture the timeless essence of the elders, reflecting their dignity, strength, and individuality. These portraits would become an important part of the project, immortalising the faces of the Windrush Generation and their descendants.

By coordinating both the oral history recordings and portraiture at the same time, the event provided a smooth and efficient way to collect both the visual and spoken legacies of the elders, ensuring that their stories were preserved in multiple ways for future generations. The process was seamless, with the young ambassadors working alongside Myah and the Museum of the Home's team to ensure that every aspect of the documentation went as smoothly as possible.

A Celebration of Music, Food, and Legacy

The event was brought to life by the wonderful contributions of key figures. Tobago Caruso and Alexander De Great, two esteemed Calypsonians, performed with passion, using spoken word and music to share the cultural and artistic contributions of the Caribbean community to British life. Their performances helped to bring the stories to life through the rhythms and poetry that have long been a part of Caribbean heritage.

The food, provided by a local Caribbean food supplier, was another highlight. It brought together the tastes and flavours of the Caribbean, evoking memories of home for many of the elders and creating a shared sense of community through food. The meal not only nourished but also played an important role in strengthening the bonds between the generations present.

Inspiring Words and Keynote Speakers

The event also featured speeches from influential guests, including Sarah from the Near Neighbours Team, Councillor Michael Desmond, and Sonia Solicari, Director of the Museum of the Home. Their words reinforced the value of the project and highlighted the importance of preserving the stories of the Windrush Generation. Their presence underscored the significance of the event and the

collective effort to remember, understand, and celebrate the elders' contributions to both the Caribbean and British societies.

One of the most special elements of the event was the involvement of Dr. Michael McMillan, the acclaimed playwright, artist, and curator of the Museum of the Home's The Front Room. Dr. McMillan's work is deeply rooted in exploring the themes of migration, identity, and memory. On the day of the event, he invited the elders to visit The Living Room, a unique space within the museum that many of the guests were unaware of. This exhibition focused on the domestic lives of Black British communities, showcasing how ordinary people shaped extraordinary histories.

The visit to The Living Room was a powerful experience for the elders, reinforcing their sense of pride and connection to the museum. It introduced them to a space that celebrated their culture and history, while also helping them understand the museum's transformation – from the Robert Geoffrey Museum to the Museum of the Home – and its renewed commitment to telling the stories of migration, colonialism, and settlement in the UK.

This part of the event was particularly important in reinforcing the legacy of the elders and further solidifying the connection between their personal histories and the museum's ongoing work to collect and preserve the stories of communities throughout British history.



A Time to Reflect and Honour

The event was not only a celebration, but a moment for the elders to reflect on their lives and legacies. It was a chance for them to connect with the museum's collections team and understand why their stories were important. As they participated in the recording booths and viewed their portraits, it became clear that the event served as a powerful reminder of the

significance of their experiences and the importance of preserving them for future generations.

The Garden Tea Party was a fitting conclusion to the project, a culmination of months of hard work, and a celebration of a community whose contributions have shaped the fabric of British history.

Conclusion Preserving Legacy, Bridging Generations

As we reflect on the completion of this profound project, it is clear that the work done by Voyage and its collaborators has not only documented the stories of the Windrush Generation but has also forged lasting bonds between the young people and the elders they came to know and admire. This project was more than just about capturing oral histories and portraits, it was about cultivating understanding, empathy, and respect across generations. It was about acknowledging the deep contributions of the Caribbean community to British life and giving the elders a space to share their stories, often for the first time, with those who may not have fully understood their journeys.

For the Heritage Ambassadors, this project was an opportunity to develop invaluable skills, ranging from oral history techniques to understanding the history of migration, racism, and colonialism in the UK. The young people learned how to listen deeply, how to ask meaningful questions, and how to handle the responsibility of documenting and preserving lives that have often been overlooked in mainstream narratives. Their involvement in this project has set the stage for them to become leaders in their own right, equipped with a new sense of cultural pride, historical knowledge, and confidence in their ability to amplify the voices of their communities.

For the elders, this project was a rare and powerful opportunity to have their stories heard, their experiences validated, and their contributions celebrated. Many of them spent years, or even decades, quietly building their lives in the UK without the recognition they deserved. This project has changed that, bringing their histories into the light and allowing them to share their personal legacies with younger generations.

The celebration event at the Museum of the Home, the seaside trip to Hastings, and the visit to the Black Cultural Archives were all pivotal moments that deepened the bonds between the young people and the elders. They were not just events, they were spaces for connection, for learning, and for the creation of memories that will last long after the project has concluded. Through these moments, the elders and young people not only exchanged stories, but also developed relationships rooted in respect and mutual appreciation.

Looking forward, the stories and portraits that have been captured will live on, not only in archives and exhibitions but in the minds and hearts of all those who participated in this transformative journey. The documentation of these stories ensures that the history of the Caribbean community in Britain is preserved for future generations, offering an important counter-narrative to the dominant stories of migration and identity that often ignore or diminish the experiences of marginalised communities. The elders' voices are now immortalised, and through the young people's continued advocacy, these stories will inspire others to ask deeper questions, seek more inclusive histories, and create a more equitable future.

This project exemplifies the power of intergenerational learning and collaboration. It shows that by coming together across generations, cultures, and experiences we can create something greater than the sum of its parts. The young people who participated in this project have not only learned about their cultural heritage, but they have also gained the tools to become change makers in their communities. The elders, in turn, have been given a platform to share their invaluable contributions to British society, reinforcing the importance of their legacies.





Getting to the End Bridging the Gaps

As the project neared its conclusion, there were still some gaps to fill. Some elders had their oral histories documented but not a photo, while others had photographs but no oral history to accompany them. In these final stages, the young people showed incredible commitment, returning to the Lunch Clubs to complete the remaining interviews and ensure every elder's legacy was captured in full. This was no small feat, but their dedication and enthusiasm to ensure that no story was left untold were truly inspiring.

With the material collected up to this point, including the valuable oral histories, portraits, and personal reflections, we reached out to Iconic Media Solutions to begin the next phase of the project: the creation of a book. Together, we started the exciting process of drafting ideas for the design and contents of Echoes of Windrush, a publication that would bring together these rich histories, images, and narratives into a permanent, accessible form.

The momentum generated by this project had a profound impact on the young people involved. Many of them began to see their roles as storytellers and history preservers in a new light, recognising the power of their voices in shaping the future. Encouraged by this, we decided to continue this important work by expanding on the ideas and energy cultivated through the project. The success of this journey led directly to the creation of Echoes of Windrush, which aims to further honour the stories of the Windrush Generation and inspire future generations to continue the work of storytelling and cultural preservation.

The project may have reached its conclusion in terms of the interviews and celebration event, but its ripple effect continues to resonate. Echoes of Windrush is not just a book, it's a legacy, a testament to the resilience, wisdom,

and enduring impact of the Caribbean community in Britain. And through the dedication of both young and elder participants, we have set in motion a powerful movement to keep these stories alive for generations to come.



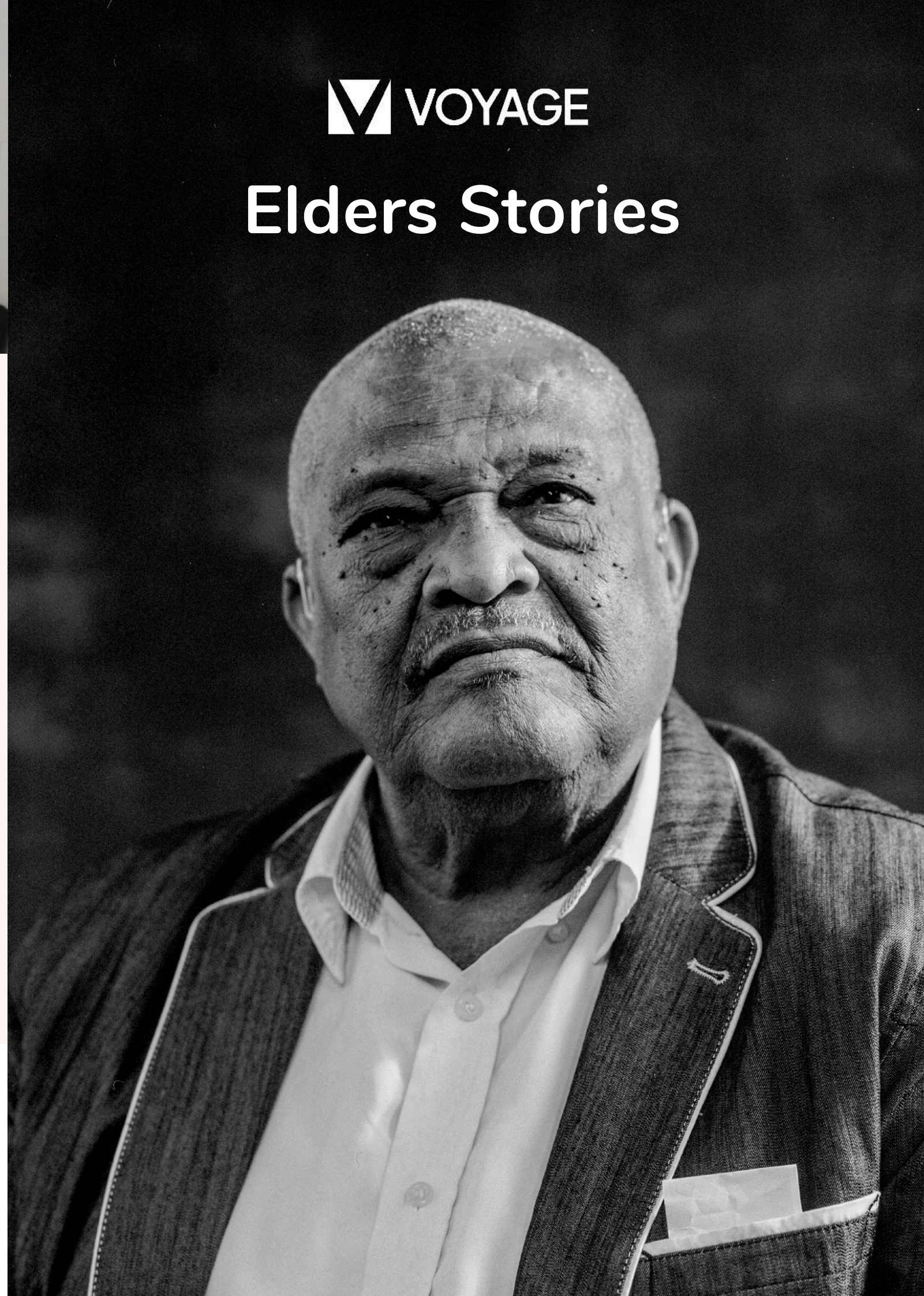
Young People Win Jack Petchey Awards for their contributions

We are honoured to acknowledge the incredible young people who participated in the Windrush Project and were nominated by Voyage for their invaluable contributions to the development of the Windrush book. The culmination of their hard work was celebrated with a memorable evening at Hackney Town Hall, where Voyage ambassadors, along with their friends and family, gathered to mark this significant achievement.

The event provided a unique opportunity for these outstanding young individuals to connect with a wider circle of peers and Hackney councillors. It was a moment of pride, reflection, and celebration, highlighting the dedication, creativity, and resilience of our youth.

The evening stood as a testament to the power of collaboration and community, underscoring the profound impact that young people can have when given the chance to shine.

Elders Stories



Honouring Every Voice

The Windrush Elders Project has been a journey of connection, reflection, and gratitude. Each elder we engaged has shaped this project with their wisdom, warmth, and lived experiences. While we were fortunate to capture full life stories from many, we also recognise and deeply value those who, for various reasons, could not participate in both the interviews and the photoshoots.

Some elders shared their voices but could not join us in front of the camera. Others lent us their presence and spirit in photographs but were unable to record their personal journeys in words. Life's demands, health, mobility, family responsibilities, and well-earned holidays, meant that some contributions were brief, yet no less significant. Every word spoken, every image captured, and every memory shared has left an imprint on this project, shaping the tapestry of stories we present here.

We would not have been able to collect these powerful testimonies without the unwavering support of our incredible Caribbean Lunch Club coordinators, who opened their doors and hearts to this project. A huge and heartfelt thank you goes to Lullynn, Paulette, Nerine and Velma your dedication, passion, and tireless commitment to the elders in our community have made this work possible. Beyond this project, your daily efforts in providing a welcoming space, nourishing meals, and joyful experiences for our elders are deeply appreciated. We also extend our deepest gratitude

to the wonderful teams of staff and volunteers who stand beside you each week, ensuring that our elders are cared for supported, and celebrated.

To honour the many contributions to this book, we have woven together key reflections and themes expressed by our elders into this section. The words in the accompanying word cloud **resilience, faith, sacrifice, courage, belonging, legacy, friendship, identity** are drawn from the very sentiments shared with us. These words speak to the triumphs and challenges of a generation that built communities, nurtured families, and shaped the Britain we know today.

Through this section, we invite you to engage with the essence of their experiences. Let these words serve as a gateway to the fuller stories that follow: stories of home, hope and heritage, love and loss, struggle and achievement, strength and celebration.

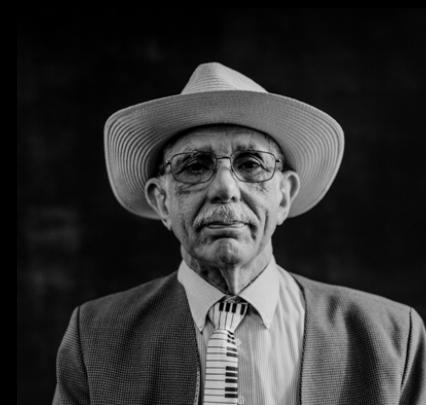
Though not every elder could be featured in a dedicated chapter, their voices and presence remain deeply embedded in this book. Every contribution, whether spoken, written, or visual, is part of a larger narrative – a testament to a generation whose stories deserve to be heard, cherished, and passed on.

As you read on, may you find inspiration in their journeys and a renewed appreciation for the profound legacy they leave behind.

challenges heritage grateful
empowerment inspiration support independence
love home identity faithful
adventure connection memories
pride friendship wisdom warmth
legacy hardworking growth faith acceptance joy
belonging education overcoming hope

To bring our book to life and honour the richness of our elders' stories, we've introduced a QR code that connects readers directly to the authentic voices of our incredible Windrush elders. This feature allows you to not only read their words but also hear them exactly as they were spoken. By doing so, we celebrate the beautiful diversity of Caribbean accents and ensure that the emotion, tone, and power behind each story are preserved and truly felt.

Honouring Every Smile



Carmen Cummings

Grenada

Place of Birth

1943

Birth Year



Full Interview

1963

Arrival in England

A Journey of Resilience and Adaptation

Carmen Cummings was born in 1943 in Grenada, a small island in the British West Indies. Growing up in a large family of five brothers and five sisters, Carmen's childhood was vibrant and full of activity. Her parents, whom she credited with providing a solid upbringing, instilled in her a sense of discipline and ambition. At school, she thrived in the rigorous structure of a Roman Catholic education, excelling in a broad curriculum that ranged from history and geography to cookery and hygiene. She particularly enjoyed spelling tests and reading, passions that stayed with her throughout her life.

In 1963, at the age of 20, Carmen left Grenada for England to join her fiancé. The journey was by ship, and she arrived in London dressed impeccably, carrying her suitcase and gloves, embodying the aspirations of a young woman embarking on a new chapter. Settling first in the Royal Borough of Kensington, she found the area charming but soon faced the realities of adjusting to life in a colder, less familiar environment. While Kensington and later Brent offered comfort, an emergency relocation to Hackney left her longing for the tranquillity of her earlier neighbourhoods. Despite her initial dislike for Hackney, Carmen eventually adjusted, finding solace in her local church, which became a source of community and spiritual comfort.

Carmen's working life in England was diverse and industrious. She began with various jobs, including working at Battersea Park and a factory in Notting Hill Gate, where she made

Valentine's Day cushions and worked with German plastics. Later, she found a stable and secure role with London Transport, working on buses, a job she intended to keep for six months but stayed in for over two decades. Carmen valued the job's benefits, including free travel and a uniform, though she often joked about how it limited her wardrobe choices outside work. Balancing her career with family life was important to her, especially ensuring she was present when her children came home from school.

Life in England was not without challenges. Carmen deeply missed her family and the comforts of her Caribbean home. She recalled with nostalgia the standpipe outside her childhood home and the festive food parcels her mother sent every Christmas, filled with smoked ham and fresh vegetables. The cultural differences, particularly around food and household conveniences, were stark. Early on, she found it difficult to adapt to washing dishes and clothes in the same sink and resorted to creative solutions, like using a bath pan for laundry and bathing.

The COVID-19 pandemic brought another layer of difficulty. For weeks, Carmen remained indoors, adhering to strict health guidelines for older adults. Despite financial strains and isolation, she found support through her church, which provided food packages and regular check-ins. Her faith and resilience saw her through the toughest times, as they had throughout her life.

Though she eventually adapted to life in England, Grenada remained close to Carmen's heart. Visits back to her homeland rekindled fond memories of the sea, fresh food, and the slower pace of life. For Carmen, her life was a testament to endurance, faith, and the ability to adjust while holding onto the essence of where she came from.

When I First Came, I Used
to be Afraid to go Outside

”



Daisy Aymer

Jamaica

Place of Birth

1940

Birth Year



Full Interview

1962

Arrival in England

From Rural Jamaica to Urban London: A Life of Change and Perseverance

Born in the 1940s in the rural village of St. Thomas, Jamaica, she was the eldest of five siblings. Her family lived close-knit lives, bound by the values of community and shared responsibilities. Raised by her father and grandmother, she learned early on the importance of family bonds, as extended relatives, including aunts, uncles, and cousins, often lived nearby. In Jamaica, her days were filled with farm work, tending to crops and animals, contributing to the family's livelihood. Education was a key part of her upbringing, though after leaving school at the age of 15, financial constraints meant that she couldn't pursue further studies. Instead, she focused on supporting the household and working the land, alongside her siblings.

Her village life, though humble, was rich in communal support. She recalls how the community felt like an extended family, where everyone knew one another and looked out for each other. School days were spent walking six miles to and from class, where sports days and visits to other schools for competitions offered welcome diversions. The simplicity of country life in Jamaica, with its close-knit community and outdoor activities, shaped much of her world-view.

In 1962, she left the warmth of the Caribbean behind and made the life-changing decision to move to the United Kingdom. The journey to London was a daunting one, but at the time, the promise of a better future beckoned. Arriving at Gatwick Airport, she experienced a profound culture shock. The cold weather, the unfamiliar sounds, and the strange sight of chimney smoke

in the air all felt alien to her. "It was a different world," she recalls, highlighting the stark contrast between the sun-drenched days of Jamaica and the foggy, chilly mornings of London.

Her first experiences in the UK were a mix of excitement and uncertainty. She settled into a small apartment in Adelaide, where she lived with a distant relative. The hustle of London was overwhelming, and there was a noticeable lack of familiar faces in the crowd. She began to adjust to life in the city, securing a job in a factory within three weeks of her arrival. Her wage, £6.96 a week, was a stark difference to what she had imagined, but it was enough to get by. The cost of living in London in the 1960s was high, and she recalls how the price of everyday goods, like bread and meat, often felt prohibitive.

In those early days, she learned quickly how to navigate the complexities of her new life. Simple tasks, like shopping for groceries or managing household chores, felt more challenging in the UK. Many homes lacked refrigerators, so she and others in her building kept food cool by placing it outside in the winter chill, a practice that seemed both quaint and practical. The absence of modern amenities was a sharp contrast to her memories of rural Jamaica, where life was simpler, if harder.

Despite the challenges, she remained determined and resilient. Over time, she made lasting connections, including a friendship that began on her first day of work. She met a young woman on the bus to her factory job, and they became fast friends, supporting each other through the ups and downs of their new lives. Their bond remained strong until her friend's passing in 2020.

Though she continued to live in the UK, her ties to Jamaica remained unbroken. Family visits were frequent, and she maintained close relationships with her siblings, many of whom later relocated to the United States. She looks back on her journey with pride, having overcome the hurdles of adapting to a new country and culture. Today, she continues to carry with her the values of family and community that shaped her upbringing, even as her own life story unfolds far from the sunny streets of St. Thomas.

We Are From the Countryside. Life is different.
In Kingston You Have Busses, Cars, That's a Different Life.

”



Beatrice Mclean

Jamaica

Place of Birth

1937

Birth Year



Full Interview

1957

Arrival in England

Faith, Learning, and Legacy: A Life Shaped by Hard Work and Service

Born in Jamaica, Beatrice arrived in England in 1957, a young woman of twenty embarking on a transformative journey. Leaving behind the vibrant life of her homeland, where she had enjoyed assisting her mother with market errands and embracing the spirited independence of her tomboyish youth, she carried with her a sense of determination that would shape her new life in Britain.

Her arrival was motivated by love. Her fiancé had preceded her to England, paving the way for her to join him. The transition was significant, marked by the stark differences in culture and community, yet she quickly embraced her new environment. Despite the challenges, she found herself invigorated by the opportunities for growth that her new home offered.

Education became a cornerstone of her life in England. While her early education began in Jamaica, she pursued further learning in Britain, attending night classes to expand her skills. She prided herself on her self-education, which included diverse areas such as nursing, cake decorating, and caring for the elderly. Each course, each new skill, was a testament to her resilience and curiosity.

Her professional life began with a role in machining, but she soon transitioned to working in hospitals. Over the years, she built a career as a nurse, dedicating herself to the care of others until her retirement.

Alongside her professional achievements, she also developed a strong connection with her community through her church. The church not only provided spiritual support but also opened doors to new experiences, such as attending conferences and engaging in charitable work.

One of her most significant contributions was her role in establishing a lunch club for her local community. Alongside a fellow member, she founded the club with a modest start, receiving just £50 from the minister to set it up. The journey was not without hurdles, the club faced financial difficulties and even theft. However, her determination and resourcefulness prevailed. The club grew into a thriving hub for social and cultural exchange, hosting Caribbean evenings, holidays, and other community events. It became a cornerstone of local life, generating funds to support both the club and the church.

Her involvement in the lunch club spanned several years, during which she worked tirelessly to ensure its success. From cooking to coordinating, she played a pivotal role in its operations, building a reputation for excellence and fostering strong relationships among members. Though she eventually passed the reins to another dedicated individual, her legacy within the club remains undeniable.

Reflecting on her life in England, she harboured no regrets. The country, she felt, had enriched her, providing her with education, experiences, and connections that shaped her journey. Through her faith, community work, and personal drive, she built a life of purpose and fulfilment. Her story, marked by hard work, resilience, and generosity, continues to inspire those who know her.

I've no Regrets Coming Here Because
Since I Came, I've Educated Myself

”



Claudette Barnett

Jamaica

Place of Birth

1950

Birth Year



Full Interview

1960s

Arrival in England

From Kingston to Clapton: Claudette Barnard's Journey of Strength and Community

Claudette Barnard's life is a vivid tapestry of resilience, adaptability, and cultural pride. Born in Kingston, Jamaica, Claudette grew up in a bustling family of eight siblings. Her early years were spent under the care of her grandmother, as her mother had emigrated to the United Kingdom, paving the way for the family's eventual reunion. Though her childhood in Jamaica was brief, it left an indelible mark on her identity.

Claudette's memories of Jamaica revolve around a close-knit community. She fondly recalls living in a tenement, where four families occupied flats upstairs and another four lived below. The communal spirit was palpable, with shared gardens where children, including Claudette, would plant and sell callaloo to earn money. It was a vibrant environment, filled with purpose and resourcefulness.

At the age of nine, Claudette left behind the warmth of the Jamaican sun for a snowy arrival in England. Her new home was in Clapton, East London, where she initially struggled to adapt. The freezing temperatures were a stark contrast to her Caribbean roots, and the snow left her yearning to return. However, Claudette persevered, gradually finding her footing in her new surroundings. Life in Clapton was markedly different, with less emphasis on outdoor activities and more time spent indoors.

As Claudette grew older, she immersed herself in various forms of work, reflecting her adaptability and determination. From sewing

men's jackets and working in childcare to caring for the elderly, bar work, and even running her own takeaway, she demonstrated a remarkable ability to navigate different roles. These jobs were not just a means of survival but also a testament to her industrious spirit. Despite these demands, she managed to balance work with raising her two children, a boy and a girl.

Her educational journey in England was marked by challenges. Claudette faced dyslexia, a condition that went unrecognised during her schooling years. This lack of support meant she struggled academically and missed out on taking exams. However, her thirst for learning did not wane. After leaving school at 18, she pursued further education through college and evening classes, proving her resilience in the face of adversity.

As an adult, Claudette found joy in travel, visiting family abroad and even living in Germany for three years. These experiences broadened her perspective and deepened her connection to the world. Despite her travels, she maintained a strong bond with her Jamaican heritage. While she no longer celebrated Christmas in the traditional Caribbean manner, she continued to embrace aspects of her culture, such as attending community events organised by groups like the Claudia Jones Organisation, which provided support for single mothers.

Now retired, Claudette cherishes her time spent at various elderly clubs, meeting people and forming connections. Her positivity and zest for life earned her the affectionate nickname "Reggae Grandma" from her grandson, reflecting her love for socialising and staying active. When asked about her outlook, she shared a simple yet profound philosophy: "Wherever you go, be yourself. Be polite, and you will get on with people."

Claudette's life is a powerful reminder of the strength found in community, the value of perseverance, and the importance of staying true to oneself. Her story resonates as a testament to the immigrant experience, celebrating both the challenges and triumphs that come with building a life in a new land.

When I Came it Was Snowing That Day and
I Wanted to go Back Home, it Was Too Cold

”



Patrick John-Baptiste

St Lucia

Place of Birth

1938

Birth Year



Full Interview

1960

Arrival in England

Homesickness and the Challenge of Finding the Right Work in the UK

Born in 1938 on the Caribbean island of St Lucia, Patrick John-Baptiste grew up in a close-knit environment. His early years were marked by an active lifestyle and a love for sports, hobbies that brought him joy during his youth.

At the age of 22, Patrick embarked on a life-changing journey to the United Kingdom. It was April 1960 when he boarded a boat named Montserrat, leaving behind the familiar shores of St Lucia. His migration was driven by a desire to further his knowledge in agriculture, a field he had already begun to pursue back home. This journey marked the beginning of a new chapter in his life.

Upon his arrival in the UK, Patrick was not met with surprise. Thanks to his friends who were already residing there, he had a support network to ease his transition. Staying with them provided him with a sense of familiarity in a land that was vastly different from his home country. Despite this, the initial period was not without its challenges. Patrick experienced a sense of homesickness, particularly as the UK lacked the facilities needed for his original line of work in agriculture.

Adapting to his new environment, Patrick shifted his professional focus. While he had previously worked on roads and bridges in St Lucia, his career in the UK took a different

path. Though the specifics of his employment were not detailed, Patrick expressed an appreciation for the opportunities and facilities available in his new home. These resources, along with his intrinsic motivation, drove him to build a fulfilling life in the UK.

Patrick's time in the UK was not marred by the negative experiences that many migrants of his era faced. He recounted no instances of racism or discrimination, and he spoke of learning about the history of his new country and testing his knowledge, experiences he found enriching. However, the differences between the UK and St Lucia remained stark, with few reminders of the tropical island he once called home.

Throughout his life, Patrick has been guided by a quiet resilience and a commitment to making the best of his circumstances. When asked what motivates him, he pointed to the facilities and opportunities available in the UK, which he viewed as sources of inspiration.

Patrick John-Baptiste's journey from St Lucia to the UK is a testament to the adaptability and perseverance required to build a life in unfamiliar surroundings. His story is a valuable part of the historical tapestry of migration, offering insight into the experiences of those who sought new opportunities far from home.

Over the years, Patrick has looked back on his journey with a sense of gratitude. The challenges he faced in his early days in the UK were pivotal in shaping his world-view and character. What started as a pursuit of knowledge and opportunity grew into a life well lived, marked by the relationships he built and the personal growth he experienced. His resilience continues to serve as a reminder of the importance of embracing change and persevering through hardship.

His Migration Was Driven by a Desire to Further His Knowledge in Agriculture

”



Elsa Dormer

Barbados

Place of Birth

1942

Birth Year



Full Interview

1962

Arrival in England

In search of opportunity

In 1962, a young woman from Barbados made the bold decision to leave her home in search of new opportunities. She was nearly 20 years old when she set foot in England, a place that seemed worlds apart from the sun-soaked island where she had grown up. Her journey was not just geographical but also one of personal transformation, shaped by the contrasts between her Caribbean upbringing and her new life in Britain.

Growing up in Barbados, she lived in a society that was transitioning towards independence. Barbados had not yet gained full sovereignty when she was a child, but it was a time of change and development. She recalls a childhood that was filled with simple joys – playing hopscotch with friends, visiting the beach under the watchful eye of an adult, and being part of a close-knit community. Her education took place in Catholic schools, where she experienced the formative years of her youth. Yet, even in her small island life, there were clear divides between the races. Wealth and business were often in the hands of the white community, and the subtle undercurrent of racial inequality was something she and others felt.

In 1962, with the option of training in either nursing or teaching, she was recruited to come to England to work as a nurse. The choice was made for her, as the demand for nurses from the Caribbean was high, and she found herself on a plane, bound for a foreign land. She had never expected to leave Barbados, but the prospect of a job and the promise of a better future led her to take a chance.

Arriving in England, she was struck by the differences in both environment and culture. The cold climate was a stark contrast to the warmth she had left behind. She recalls being awestruck by the houses, with their chimneys and quaint designs, and the sudden realisation of how different life in Britain was. Though she was accompanied by a fellow Caribbean migrant, the isolation was palpable at times. Despite the challenges, she quickly adapted, finding solace in her work at the hospital and in the friendship of those who shared similar experiences.

Life in the UK was not without its hardships, particularly in the face of the occasional racial prejudice. She remembers a moment when she went to a hospital for work, and a door was slammed in her face as soon as the staff realised she was black. However, she didn't let such incidents define her experience. Instead, she focused on building her career and making a life for herself in this new land.

Financially, things were modest. She describes how much cheaper life was in Britain compared to Barbados, but also recalls the struggles of making ends meet, particularly in the early years. Despite this, there was an underlying sense of excitement and hope. With a sense of purpose, she worked hard, and after a time, managed to make a living and build a stable life.

As she settled in, she also formed deeper connections with her Caribbean roots. She regularly visited other Caribbean islands, including Union Island and Jamaica, forming bonds with people who shared her heritage. These trips provided a sense of belonging and a reminder of where she came from.

Today, looking back at her journey, she sees it as one of growth. She is a proud woman who faced the challenges of migration, the obstacles of racism, and the difficulties of starting anew in a foreign land. Her resilience and commitment to forging a new life are testaments to her strength. Though the world around her has changed in many ways, she remains rooted in her values, always embracing the beauty of both her Caribbean heritage and her adopted British home.

I Was Lucky I Came
With Another Girl

”



Yvonne Straughn

Barbados

Place of Birth

1941

Birth Year



Full Interview

1966

Arrival in England

Adapting, Learning, and Leading

Yvonne's journey from Barbados to the UK in 1966 marked the beginning of a life that would span continents, cultures, and experiences. Born as the youngest of six children in Barbados, Yvonne grew up in a lively household where she learned the importance of independence from a young age. The daughter of a tailor and a mother who ran a small business selling bread and biscuits, Yvonne was exposed to both the value of hard work and entrepreneurial spirit.

Her upbringing was not without its challenges, particularly as the only girl among five brothers. She recalls her childhood as one filled with sibling rivalry and a strong desire to assert her independence. "I was rebellious," she says with a smile, remembering how she would refuse to do chores unless she was paid. She once went so far as to roll her brother's socks in mud after he refused to pay her for washing them. These early experiences shaped her strong sense of self and determination, qualities she would carry with her throughout her life.

At the age of 22, Yvonne embarked on a life-changing adventure, leaving behind her family and the familiarity of Barbados to train as a nurse in the UK. Arriving at Heathrow Airport in June 1966, she was struck by the overwhelming sense of unfamiliarity. "It was curious for us," she says, recalling the nerves she felt at first. "Once you get your head around it, you have to get on with it." She travelled alone, though she had relatives in the UK who helped her get settled. Her first experience of British food was less than memorable: "Fish and chips with gravy - what is this?" she laughed, recalling her confusion and the way she had to adjust to the tastes of her new environment.

Yvonne's work as a nurse was a cornerstone of her life in the UK. She remembers the early days with mixed emotions, some patients were warm and welcoming, while others were more hostile. Yet, she found fulfillment in her work, particularly in the way it allowed her to contribute to her community. "I loved nursing," she says, speaking of the satisfaction she derived from helping others, even in challenging circumstances.

Her time in the UK was also marked by her adaptation to a vastly different climate. "The first time I saw snow, I ate it," she laughs, recalling how the cold winter weather was a shock to her system. "It was so strange to me." The change in surroundings, from the warm, tropical life in Barbados to the cold and grey skies of London, took some getting used to, but Yvonne's resilience saw her through. She worked long hours and learned to navigate the demands of life in a new country, all while holding on to the values of hard work and independence that had been instilled in her from a young age.

Her background in both English and the local Bajan dialect helped her adjust quickly to life in the UK, and she never felt there was a language barrier. Education had been an important part of her life in Barbados, and she had gained her O-levels in English, history, and other subjects. This foundation helped her thrive academically and professionally once she arrived in the UK.

Living in the UK was not without its cultural adjustments, but Yvonne quickly found a sense of belonging in the West Indian community. She recalls how she and her fellow nurses from diverse backgrounds Jamaican, Trinidadian, Grenadian - came together to celebrate their shared heritage. "We all blended together," she reflects. Through these relationships, Yvonne learned new things, including the dances of other Caribbean cultures, which she still cherishes today.

Yvonne's story is one of resilience, adaptation, and an unwavering sense of independence. Her journey from Barbados to the UK was more than a mere physical relocation, it was the beginning of a new chapter filled with growth, challenge, and triumph. Her experiences in both her professional and personal life continue to inspire her as she reflects on the life she has built, far from the shores of her birthplace.

We Come From Too Far to Give Up

”



Merlin Richardson

Jamaica

Place of Birth

1935

Birth Year



Full Interview

1960

Arrival in England

A Life of Faith

Maryam's life journey, marked by faith, family, and a deep connection to her Jamaican roots, began in the North of London. She arrived in the UK at a young age, accompanying her father, a Methodist minister, who had made the decision to move with his family from Jamaica. Despite the challenges of adjusting to a new environment, she embraced her new life in Britain, where she would eventually pursue a career in nursing.

Growing up in Jamaica, Maryam's life was steeped in the religious devotion of her family. Her father, a respected figure in the church, was a source of discipline and care, ensuring that Maryam and her siblings were raised with strong values. Her early memories of church services, the community spirit, and the teachings of her parents formed the foundation of her character. Even as a child, she felt the comfort and security of being part of a larger family of faith, where respect and good behaviour were key tenets.

Her early education in Jamaica was brief, as her parents often relocated for work, leaving her to stay with her grandparents. However, the influence of her father's ministry and her mother's nurturing nature continued to shape her. Eventually, Maryam moved to London with her family, where her life would take a new direction. In the UK, she pursued a career in nursing, a profession that allowed her to care for others while drawing on the strength of her upbringing. She spent many years working

in the healthcare sector, before eventually retiring. Her career in nursing, which spanned decades, was more than just a job, it was a calling, a way for her to give back and care for others in the way her parents had always cared for her.

Throughout her life, Maryam's relationship with her family remained a constant. She married, but her husband passed away before long. In time, she became a matriarch in her own right, helping to raise a family of her own. Despite the hardships she faced, Maryam always maintained a sense of gratitude, often reflecting on the values instilled in her by her parents. The lessons of faith, service, and perseverance continued to guide her, even in the face of loss.

Maryam was not just defined by her work and faith, however. She had a zest for life that manifested in her love for music, travel, and socialising. She fondly remembers the times she attended Bob Marley's concerts and the joy she found in dancing. In addition, her family's travels took them to various parts of the world, with items collected from places like Italy, Malta, and the United States, adding to the tapestry of her rich, multicultural experiences.

Despite the passing of her parents, Maryam's life remains a testament to their influence. Their legacy, built on hard work, love, and service, has shaped the person she is today. She fondly recalls the home in Jamaica where she was raised in a large, spacious house surrounded by land, a stark contrast to the more modest accommodations she experienced in the UK. But for Maryam, it was never about material wealth, it was about the love and the faith that anchored her throughout her life.

Maryam's story is one of resilience, faith, and an unwavering commitment to family. It is a story of someone who, like the roots of the church she grew up in, stands firm through life's trials, always with an eye to the future and a heart full of memories.

You Get Along
With Everything
”



Patsy Shepherd

Jamaica

Place of Birth

1949

Birth Year



Full Interview

1964

Arrival in England

A Life of full of stories: Patsy's Journey from Jamaica to England

Patsy, born in 1949 in Jamaica, has lived a life that reflects both the challenges and triumphs of migration and personal growth. The eldest of seven siblings, her early years in Jamaica were shaped by a sense of responsibility often caring for her younger brothers despite the closeness in their ages. Her mother, a strong and motivating figure in her life, left for England in 1962 to build a better future. Two years later, at the age of 15, Patsy and her younger brother joined her.

The journey to England marked a significant shift in Patsy's life. Arriving in Stepney, London, she was immediately struck by cultural differences, particularly the more assertive behaviour of English children, something she had not encountered in Jamaica. Despite these challenges, Patsy adjusted quickly, attributing her adaptability to her supportive family. "I was with my mum, so it wasn't like I was coming to a stranger," she reflects.

Patsy's education in England began at a local school, where she studied until the age of 18. She pursued office training, learning shorthand and typing, skills that would shape her professional life. After finishing school, she found her first job as a typist. Over time, her career took a diverse path, with roles ranging from office work to positions with the Civil Aviation Authority, where she spent many years before retiring early in 1996. Despite her retirement, Patsy has continued to keep busy with various part-time roles and volunteering.

Her passion for learning and personal development has always been a cornerstone of her life. Patsy enjoys reading, particularly history, and she's always had a talent for cooking and making clothes, skills she developed at a young age and still practices today. Her hobbies, however, were not just pastimes, they were ways for her to stay connected to the world and her heritage. Patsy's resilience and ability to adapt were also evident in her commitment to community. She was introduced to a local lunch club by a family friend, Beatrice, and from there, her involvement in volunteer work blossomed. For over 18 years, Patsy has volunteered at a local hospice, a role that has brought her immense satisfaction and allowed her to continue giving back to the community.

The example of her mother, who was "the brightest person" Patsy has ever known, has been her guiding light throughout her life. Patsy often speaks of the way her mother could discuss any topic with ease, leaving a lasting impression on her. This inspiration continues to fuel Patsy's own growth and determination.

Now retired, Patsy spends her days involved in various local activities, from knitting at the Blue Cross to continuing her volunteer work. She is an active participant in life, finding joy and purpose in the community around her. Even in her later years, Patsy remains a model of resilience and dedication, committed to making the most of each day and supporting those around her.

Patsy's journey is a testament to the power of perseverance, adaptability, and a deep commitment to both personal and community growth. Throughout her life, she has faced challenges with grace, transforming obstacles into opportunities for learning and connection. Her story reflects not only the immigrant experience but also the universal pursuit of self-improvement and service to others. Patsy's life, enriched by her passion for learning, her close-knit family, and her dedication to helping others, continues to inspire those who have had the privilege of knowing her. Even in retirement, she remains a vibrant presence in her community, constantly striving to make a difference, no matter how small the act.

I Was Motivated by My Mum. I Always Say
She's the Brightest Person I've Ever Known

”



Pauline Wiltshire

Jamaica

Place of Birth

1950

Birth Year



Full Interview

1976

Arrival in England

A New Beginning: Pauline's Journey to a New Home

Pauline's story is one of resilience and self-discovery, shaped by a journey that began in a faraway land and led to the streets of England. Though her early years remain largely undefined in the transcript, it is clear that her roots are deeply entwined with both her family and the community around her. Her narrative speaks of a life where hardships and hopes converged to create a path towards personal and professional growth.

Although the precise details of her early years are unclear, there is an undercurrent of affection for the familial bond. Her memories of Jamaica evoke images of a life shaped by both art and the closeness of family, despite the challenges they faced. Pauline's recollection of her community, too, paints a picture of a place where connection was at the forefront, even though it was not without its difficulties.

Her journey to England, assisted by her cousin came with expectations, a desire for something different, something more. Her move was marked by uncertainty, but she faced it with determination. Upon arriving, she was struck by the contrasts between her homeland and the new country. From her first experiences in England, there was a sense of adaptation, a feeling of learning to navigate a new culture while carrying with her the essence of her own.

Her early years in England were not easy. Pauline worked various jobs to support herself, including a job in a factory packing plastic bags and another in the food industry, earning modest wages. Despite these challenges, she found strength in her work and learned invaluable lessons about perseverance and the importance of maintaining a strong work ethic.

The process of settling into her new life was gradual. Pauline's first home in England was a six-bedroom house where she had her own room. Over time, the feeling of belonging began to take root, and she started to appreciate the comforts of a stable home life. The community she now called home had its own set of dynamics, and Pauline adapted by engaging with her surroundings, taking part in local events and finding joy in her small victories.

Throughout it all, Pauline's love for food remained a constant. Her passion for cooking became a way for her to connect to her roots, to recreate the meals of her childhood, and to share them with others. Cooking became more than just a skill, it was a form of expression, a means of preserving her heritage while embracing her new life in England.

As she grew in confidence, Pauline began to take part in new ventures, including working part-time on projects she was passionate about. It was in these moments that she began to reflect on the influence of her mother and the deep cultural traditions she had inherited. She would go on to explore further, learning more about herself and her place in the world.

Pauline's story is one of adaptation and transformation. It reflects a journey that many people can relate to, one of overcoming adversity, finding one's way in the face of change, and, ultimately, making a new home in a new land.

If You Dont Use
You Will Loose It
”



Sybil Atkins

Barbados

Place of Birth

1936

Birth Year



Full Interview

1965

Arrival in England

A Life of Transition: From Barbados to Britain

Sybil was born in Barbados on July 24, 1936, and spent her early years on the idyllic island surrounded by sun and sea. Her memories of childhood in Barbados are filled with warmth, both in the climate and from the sense of community that enveloped her. "The community looked after the children," she recalls fondly, noting how everyone played a role in raising the younger generation. It was a time when respect for elders was paramount, if a child misbehaved, punishment could come from anyone in the community, and any complaints to a parent would only result in further consequences.

Sybil's mother, a hard-working woman, provided for the family through various jobs, including cooking for a plantation and engaging in dressmaking and shop work. Though Sybil did not have the privilege of growing up close to her grandparents her grandmother lived in America. She shared a connection with her mother that was both loving and nurturing. They would often attend church together and share simple joys like bus rides, creating a strong bond between them.

In 1965, at the age of 27, Sybil made the life-changing decision to move to the United Kingdom. It was a decision spurred by the promise of better opportunities, but it came with its own set of challenges. Sybil arrived in London in October of that year, landing at Heathrow Airport, and was immediately struck by the stark difference between her homeland and the cold, grey environment of Britain. The weather was particularly hard to adjust to, a far cry from the consistent warmth of Barbados. "It was strange,

because we had sunshine all the time," Sybil explains, recalling the difficulty of acclimatising to the UK's chill.

The transition wasn't only about the weather. Sybil found that the sense of community she had known in Barbados was absent in Britain. "The West Indians stayed by themselves, and the others stayed by themselves," she says, explaining the fragmented nature of social life in her new home. While the UK was not openly hostile, Sybil remembers instances of racial tension, particularly when people made comments like "Why don't you go back to where you come from?" One incident on a bus stands out vividly. When a woman attempted to make a rude remark, Sybil stood her ground, responding with a sharp retort: "I've got somewhere to go back to. Where do you have to go?" This moment of defiance became a testament to her resilience in the face of prejudice.

Her early days in London were modest. Sybil and her husband lived in a single room, a sharp contrast to the spaciousness of their home in Barbados. Though they managed to find work, Sybil's first job was with a television company. Life in the cramped quarters was difficult. "We had a room with everything in it," she reflects. It was a far cry from the open spaces she had been used to, and the experience often left her feeling a sense of claustrophobia.

As a mother of three children, Sybil found raising her family in the UK to be a challenge. With no extended family to rely on, she and her husband had to manage everything themselves. "It was very hard because I didn't have any family here," she shares. Nevertheless, Sybil remained determined, navigating the complexities of life in a foreign land while maintaining a sense of cultural pride.

Now, as Sybil reflects on her life, she is proud of the path she has carved and the strength she has shown through times of adversity. Her children, now in their 50s and 60s, have flourished, a testament to her perseverance and dedication. The journey from Barbados to Britain, from warmth to cold, from tight quarters to independence, has shaped her into the resilient woman she is today.

It Was Very Hard Because
I Didn't Have Any Family Here.

”



Esau Odain (nickname Charlie)

Saint Vincent and
the Grenadines

Place of Birth

1939

Birth Year



Full Interview

1961

Arrival in England

A Life of Resilience and Reflection: The Journey of Esau Odain

Esau Odain, born on 30th September 1939 in the village of Esteban on the Caribbean island of Saint Vincent, reflects on a life shaped by both adversity and hope. At 85, he carries with him a wealth of experience, some of which have been tinged with pain, but also moments of personal triumph.

In his youth, Esau attended school in Saint Vincent, where education was all-encompassing. "You had to study everything," he recalls, though his path would not lead him to higher education. His childhood, he describes, was a pleasant one, filled with the warmth of family and community.

At 22, in 1961, Esau left his home behind, seeking a new life in the United Kingdom. His journey to Britain was motivated by the hope of finding better work and a brighter future, common among many Caribbean immigrants of the time. His arrival, though full of promise, was also marked by challenges.

In those early days, Esau found work with British Railways, starting on the Monday following his arrival on a Thursday. It was hard, physical work, but it provided the stability he sought. However, it was not without difficulties. As a young black man, Esau experienced racism, both subtle and overt. A particularly painful memory is of a young child asking his mother, "What's that?" a remark that struck him deeply, highlighting the ignorance and prejudice he encountered. "It was awkward," he says quietly, reflecting on the innocence and cruelty of such moments.

Despite these struggles, Esau was not alone. He found comfort in a community of fellow Caribbeans who had already settled in the area, including a family from Saint Vincent who took him in when he first arrived. "You gravitate to people you know," he explains, and this sense of kinship helped ease the transition to his new life.

Esau's ambitions were simple yet profound: to live a good life. Over the years, he achieved this through hard work and determination. He raised four children, three sons and a daughter and managed to carve out a sense of belonging in a foreign land. Though his life in Britain was marked by struggles, it was also filled with moments of pride, particularly when he looked back on the family he built.

Yet, like many, Esau has also faced personal challenges. At times, the weight of life's difficulties, particularly "evil" or personal problems, would keep him awake at night. Still, he finds solace in life itself. "I love life," he says with a smile, an attitude that has helped him endure.

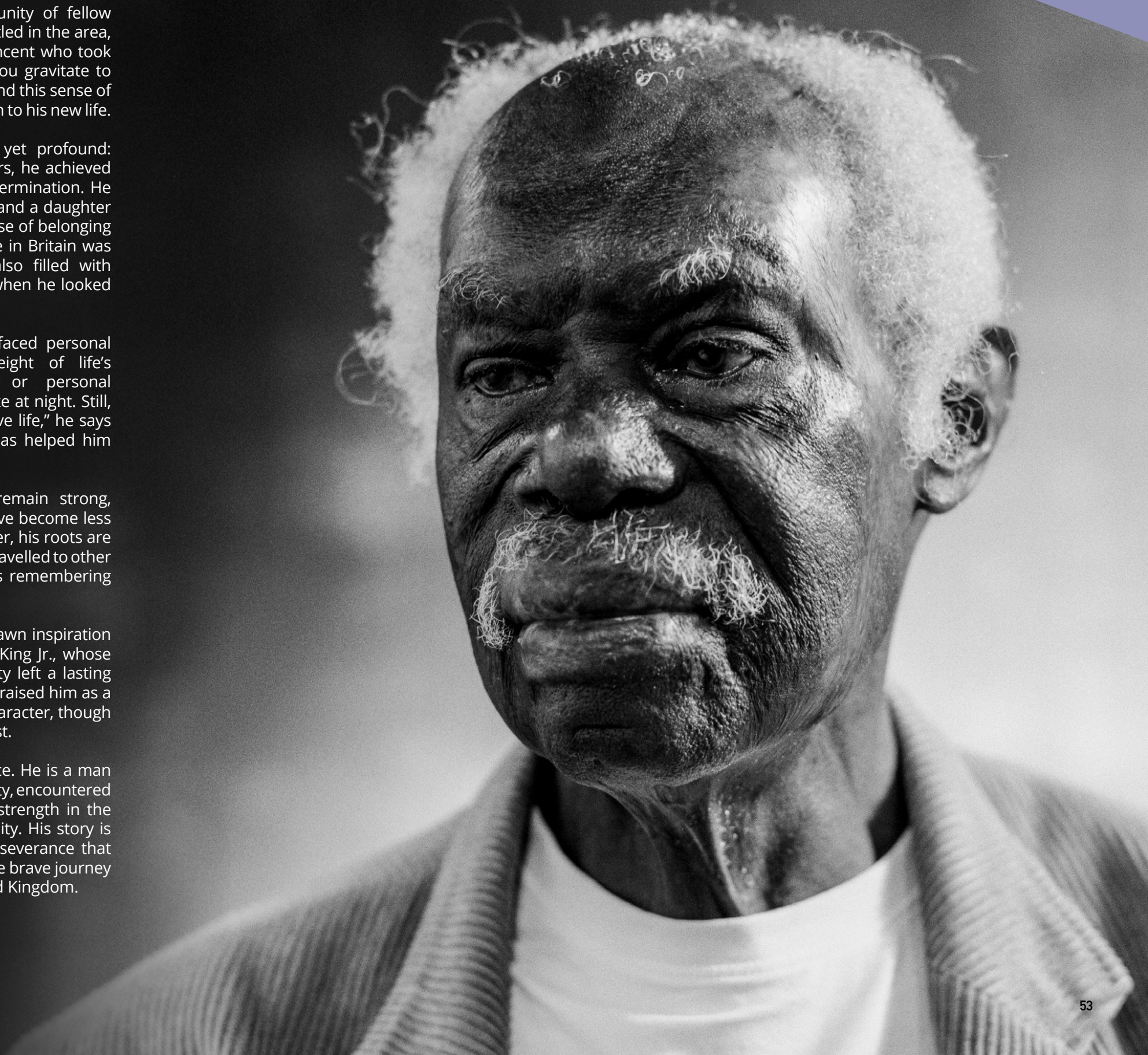
Esau's ties to his homeland remain strong, though visits to Saint Vincent have become less frequent in recent years. However, his roots are never far from his heart. He has travelled to other islands in the Caribbean, always remembering the place where he grew up.

Throughout his life, Esau has drawn inspiration from figures like Martin Luther King Jr., whose dedication to justice and equality left a lasting impact on him. His mother, who raised him as a single parent, also shaped his character, though he doesn't dwell much on his past.

Esau's journey is one of resilience. He is a man who left home seeking opportunity, encountered hardship, but ultimately found strength in the love of life, family, and community. His story is a testament to the spirit of perseverance that defines many who have made the brave journey from the Caribbean to the United Kingdom.

I Came Thursday.
I Start Work Monday

”



Lucy Bubb

Grenada

Place of Birth

1939

Birth Year



Full Interview

1957

Arrival in England

A Life of Resilience: Lucy Bubb's Journey from Grenada to the UK

Lucy Bubb's life story is one of quiet determination, shaped by her early years in Grenada and later, her journey to the United Kingdom. Born in the Caribbean island of Grenada, Lucy was raised in a strict household where freedom to roam was not an option. Her mother's rule was clear, there would be no late nights spent out on the streets. This sense of discipline, though perhaps restrictive at the time, would be a guiding force in her life.

Lucy's childhood memories are few, but she recalls participating in church activities and festivals, like the vibrant Grenadian Carnival, where the energy of the festivities and the excitement of childhood mixed. Despite these moments of joy, her upbringing was largely centred around faith and family, rather than carefree days of play. Yet, it was through these experiences that Lucy's character was built: a sense of responsibility and a connection to community that would stay with her throughout her life.

After her formative years in Grenada, Lucy's life took a significant turn when she moved to Trinidad to stay with her aunt. She was a young woman, just eighteen or nineteen, and the move to a new country was a pivotal moment. While it was the beginning of a new chapter, it also marked the start of a life built on self-reliance. After a while, she moved to the UK, again with her aunt's support. In this new land, Lucy quickly adapted to the challenges of being far from home.

Her work history in the UK began in earnest when she took a job at a boys' college. Though that job ended after three years due to the college's closure, Lucy soon found another path in healthcare, working as an auxiliary nurse in a hospital. This role, though demanding, was one she grew to cherish. She dedicated herself to the well-being of others, always conscious of the needs of the people she was caring for. "You're there for them," she reflected, "not for yourself." Her commitment to her work and her belief in helping others without complaint set the tone for her professional life.

Lucy's dedication did not go unnoticed. She worked tirelessly for over 20 years in the healthcare sector, but eventually, the mental strain of the job led her to retire. Her resilience remained, and she sought new opportunities in places like London Transport, where she found joy in working with others once again. Although Lucy faced moments of discrimination in her earlier years in the UK, she was resolute in her approach to life, never letting setbacks deter her.

The years have passed, and Lucy no longer faces the same challenges she once did. Her life is now quieter, though she still carries the lessons learned from those earlier years of hard work and sacrifice. Lucy has no major regrets. Her days are simple, punctuated by the quiet rhythms of daily life, but with a sense of fulfilment from the path she carved for herself.

Throughout her life, Lucy found strength in faith and family, especially in the relationships she forged through church and community. It was through these connections that she met Daphne, a friend she has shared much of her journey with. Their friendship, born of shared experiences, has been a source of comfort and support for many years.

Lucy's story is one of resilience, moving from Grenada to the UK, working diligently in every role she took on, and never letting the challenges of life keep her down. Her life, built on the foundation of strict upbringing, faith, and determination, stands as a testament to the quiet power of perseverance.

Mom Never Used
to Let Us Go Out

”



Sydna Peart

Jamaica

Place of Birth

1937

Birth Year



Full Interview

1960

Arrival in England

A Life in Motion

Sydna, a woman of quiet resilience, was born in the countryside of Saint Elizabeth, Jamaica, in 1957. Her early years were spent in Kingston, where, like many children, she spent her days playing in the streets and attending school. But her education was cut short at the age of fifteen, when she left school to help support her family. Though she didn't pursue formal studies, she found work as a skilled artisan, creating intricate items from raffia, a form of embroidery using straw. It was a humble living, yet it provided her with a sense of purpose and connection to her cultural heritage.

In 1960, in her early twenties, Sydna's life took an unexpected turn. A meeting with a man she had known for years led her to England. "I didn't really have a plan to come here," she recalls. "But my younger brother convinced me." Her brother's cautionary words about the man's intentions led Sydna to follow a path that was uncertain yet full of promise. She married soon after arriving in Britain, settling into a new life far from her Jamaican roots.

Her journey in the UK was one of transformation. Sydna adapted to a world that was both foreign and exciting. Her early years here were marked by social outings and a vibrant social life. "My husband was a party goer," she says with a knowing smile. "We went partying most of the time." Weekends would see the couple travelling to Gloucester or Bristol, where they danced and celebrated with friends. But these carefree days didn't last long. The arrival of their five children, three girls and two boys

ushered in a new chapter, one that required her full attention and care.

The absence of family support in those early years made motherhood a challenging but rewarding task. "There were no grandparents, no babysitters," Sydna remembers. "You had to look after your children yourself." In contrast to today, where extended family can often lend a helping hand, Sydna had to navigate the complexities of raising children without the familiar support networks she had known in Jamaica.

Though her time in Britain was filled with both joys and struggles, Sydna does not dwell on regrets. She speaks fondly of her friendships and the moments of joy that punctuated her life. Yet, there was also the disorienting experience of adjusting to life in a new country. One of the most memorable challenges she faced was the lack of basic amenities. "When I first came here, there was no bath, no shower," she recalls, her voice tinged with incredulity. "We had to wash in a bowl and use the public baths when we could." It was a far cry from the comforts of home, but Sydna adapted, just as she had done so many times before.

Despite the obstacles she encountered, Sydna's life in Britain was shaped by resilience. There were no grand ambitions or lofty dreams, only the steady rhythm of family life, the care of her children, and the warmth of her community. "Not really bad experiences," she reflects, adding that she was fortunate enough to make lasting friendships.

As she looks back on her life, Sydna feels content, her spirit unchanged by time or hardship. She has no regrets, only a quiet sense of accomplishment in having navigated the challenges of a new country and raised a family in a place that once seemed so unfamiliar. Today, she finds motivation in the simple moments, cherishing what she has built and looking forward to what's yet to come.

We Used To Do a Lot of Partying and Dancing Until I Had Children

”



Vesta Peart

Jamaica

Place of Birth

1942

Birth Year



Full Interview

1962

Arrival in England

Faith and Family

Vesta Peart was born in Jamaica in 1942, a land of vibrant culture and close-knit communities. Her early years were spent in the warmth of her homeland, attending a Seventh-day Adventist school where she received a basic education. Despite moving through several towns during her childhood, she fondly remembers her schooling and the sense of connection that her community provided. Yet, Vesta's aspirations soon drew her toward a new chapter far from home.

In 1962, at just 20 years old, Vesta arrived in the United Kingdom, landing at Gatwick Airport on September 13th. It was a moment of mixed emotions, excitement for a new life, tempered by the stark realities of a foreign land. "I looked at all the chimneys and thought they baked a lot of bread in this country," she recalled, laughing at her innocent assumptions about England's industrial skyline. Her first impression of London, however, was less forgiving. "I said to myself, 'This place is filthy,'" she admitted, contrasting the bustling streets and sooty skies with the rural simplicity of Jamaica.

Adapting to life in the UK was not without its challenges. Vesta had left behind friends and family, driven by a determination to forge a better future. "I cried to come to this country," she admitted, but once here, she was resolved to make it work. Her resilience shone through as she embraced her new environment, finding ways to connect with those around her despite cultural differences. "I get along with anybody," she said, a testament to her open-mindedness and unwavering optimism.

One of Vesta's fondest memories is of her early years in the UK, marked by a sense of unity within the immigrant community. "When I came here, we were more together," she reflected. Her personal life flourished as well. In 1972, she welcomed her first daughter and later moved into the home of her future husband. They married in 1973 and had two more daughters, building a family rooted in love and perseverance. For Vesta, family was always central, and her children, all daughters, were her pride and joy.

Throughout her life, Vesta was inspired by her uncle, a mathematics teacher who had studied at Oxford University. A man of principles, he valued respect and discipline, values Vesta deeply admired. Despite his opportunities abroad, he returned to Jamaica, longing for the cultural decorum of his homeland. His journey and ethos left a lasting impression on Vesta, shaping her outlook on education and personal integrity.

Reflecting on her dreams, Vesta expressed a longing for further education. "I wish I had gone back to school and learned a bit more," she said. Her aspirations were not limited to academics, however, she also sought a deeper spiritual connection. "I want to know more about God," she shared, a goal that guides her as she navigates her later years.

Now, in her eighties, Vesta finds joy in the simple routines of daily life. Feeding her cat, keeping her home tidy, and preparing breakfast are her small yet meaningful rituals. She is grateful for her good health, peaceful nights, and the lessons life has taught her.

Vesta Peart's story is one of resilience, adaptability, and an enduring commitment to personal growth. From her humble beginnings in Jamaica to her life in Britain, she remains a woman shaped by her experiences yet steadfast in her values, cherishing the unity, love, and faith that define her journey.

I Wish I Had Gone Back to School Over a Year
And Learn a Bit More. Get a Bit More Education

”



Joycelyn Scarborough

Guyana

Place of Birth

1947

Birth Year



Full Interview

1958

Arrival in England

Faith and Family

Jocelyn Scarborough's life is filled with dedication, and the enduring bonds of family. Born in Guyana, Jocelyn's childhood was deeply rooted in family and tradition. Her father, a resourceful businessman, managed to support the family from abroad, sending for Jocelyn, her mother, her three brothers, four sisters, and two cousins to join him in England when she was about 11 or 12 years old.

Adjusting to life in a new country came with challenges, but Jocelyn's family embraced the opportunities that England offered. Initially, life was modest. The family of ten shared limited living space, adapting to a single-room setup and an outdoor toilet. Despite these hardships, Jocelyn's upbringing instilled a strong sense of respect and discipline, values reinforced through her schooling and family life. She recalls the strictness of her school in Guyana, where homework and respect for elders were non-negotiable, a contrast to the freedoms afforded to children today.

Education was a pivotal part of Jocelyn's early years in England. She completed her schooling by the age of 16, the typical leaving age at the time. Soon after, she began carving out a life of her own, marrying her lifelong partner. Together, they navigated life's many challenges, raising five children, four boys and a girl. Jocelyn recalls the sacrifices and joys of motherhood, particularly the sense of accomplishment in balancing family life while pursuing her professional goals.

In her early 20s, Jocelyn returned to education, attending college to pursue a career in nursing. She was among the youngest in her cohort and vividly remembers the pride of qualifying as a nurse. Her work in nursing, especially night shifts, allowed her to provide for her family while being present for her children during the day. Her dedication to both her profession and family reflects her tireless work ethic and commitment to nurturing others.

Life in England during Jocelyn's early years was marked by racial discrimination, an experience shared by many from the Caribbean and other immigrant communities. She recalls the visible signs of prejudice, such as landlords refusing to rent to "coloured" people and the hardships of communal living in rented houses. Despite this, Jocelyn and her family persevered, carving out a stable life and finding solace in close-knit friendships, many of which endure to this day.

Jocelyn's family expanded over the years, and she now boasts 14 grandchildren and 11 great-grandchildren. She takes pride in the fact that, despite the large family, she has not been heavily relied upon for childcare, allowing her to enjoy her later years.

Although Jocelyn briefly lived and worked in Tobago, where she managed award-winning accommodations, her heart always remained in England. Her travels to the Caribbean became less frequent over time, as her family roots in Britain deepened.

Reflecting on her journey, Jocelyn cherishes the connections she has maintained over the decades, particularly with friends she has known for over 60 years. Her story is one of strength, adaptability, and the enduring power of family, a testament to the sacrifices made by immigrant families and the rich legacies they have built.

You Had to Respect
Your Elders

”



Ivy Jackson

Jamaica

Place of Birth

1928

Birth Year



Full Interview

1953

Arrival in England

Faith, Family, and Fortitude

Born in 1928 in Manchester, Jamaica, Ivy Jackson's life has been a testament to resilience, adaptability, and a commitment to family and community. Her early years were marked by a vibrant childhood, where education, church activities, and learning trades like tailoring shaped her formative experiences. She learned to play the piano and actively participated in her church's musical and service-oriented activities, a foundation that would guide her life even in later years.

In 1953, at the age of 23, Ivy embarked on a life-changing journey to the United Kingdom, joining her husband who had travelled before her. She arrived by ship, the *Irina del Pacifico*, during a period of great hope but also significant challenges for Caribbean migrants. The promise of opportunity and a better future for her family led her to leave Jamaica, where two of her four children remained in her mother's care. However, the reality she faced upon arrival was far from the idyllic visions she had held of Britain, the so-called "mother country."

Settling first in Holloway, London, Ivy encountered a society often hostile to immigrants. Housing discrimination was rampant, with signs declaring "No Blacks, No Irish, No Dogs" a common sight. Her first home was a small, cramped room, a far cry from the spacious living conditions she had known in Jamaica. Employment was equally fraught, opportunities were scarce,

and prejudice was pervasive. Ivy's first job was in a factory pressing clothes, a role she secured only after demonstrating her skill and persistence.

Despite the adversities, Ivy's determination never wavered. Over the years, she transitioned from factory work to sewing at home while raising her children. Her adaptability and entrepreneurial spirit enabled her to balance domestic responsibilities with earning an income. Eventually, she pursued nursing, working at institutions such as Saint Bartholomew's Hospital, where she remained until her retirement.

Ivy's experiences of discrimination and hardship were tempered by the camaraderie of the West Indian community. Weekends were filled with music, laughter, and shared meals, creating a sense of home amidst the challenges. A treasured possession, a blue-spot radiogram, became a focal point for gatherings, where friends brought records and ginger wine to celebrate their heritage and foster a sense of belonging.

Throughout her life, Ivy's faith and church involvement remained central. As a head deaconess in her local Seventh-day Adventist Church, she led welfare initiatives, distributing food to those in need and supporting her community with unwavering dedication. Her commitment to service was not only a reflection of her values but also a lesson she imparted to her children: to do good in all circumstances.

Reflecting on her journey, Ivy acknowledged the profound sacrifices and rewards of migration. She missed the sunshine of Jamaica and the fruits of her homeland but learned to adapt and find joy in the UK. Her story stands as a powerful reminder of the resilience and contributions of the Windrush generation, whose struggles and triumphs have indelibly shaped modern Britain.

Don't Vex
Anyone
”



Norma Campell

Jamaica

Place of Birth

1956

Birth Year



Full Interview

1966

Arrival in England

A Journey Through Time

Norma's life is a testament to adaptation, and an acute sense of justice. Born in Jamaica in 1956, specifically in Hanover, Norma's early years were marked by simplicity and community. She recalls her childhood fondly, mentioning days spent at the river, where washing clothes, cooking, and bathing formed part of daily life. Walking barefoot was normal, a contrast she would later reflect on when she migrated to the United Kingdom.

In December 1966, at the age of 10, Norma's life changed dramatically. Leaving behind the warmth and familiarity of Jamaica, she arrived in Crewe, Cheshire, during one of Britain's coldest winters. The experience was a shock to her system. Smog filled the air, reducing visibility to mere inches, and coal-fired heating was a stark contrast to the tropical climate she had left behind. Norma vividly recalls the struggles of adapting to the cold, the layers of clothing required, and the paraffin heaters used to keep warm, which often emitted noxious fumes.

The transition was not only physical but emotional. Norma describes her first days in the UK as deeply traumatic. She and her elder brother sat on the stairs of their new home, crying in despair at the darkness and unfamiliarity. Yet, amidst the challenges, she found pockets of support. At school, despite being one of only five Black students among 500, Norma's abilities were recognised. She became a school prefect and a games captain, participating in various sports teams, from tennis to athletics.

Norma's experiences at school highlighted both the barriers and opportunities she faced. Language was not an issue, as English was widely spoken in Jamaica, albeit with a dialectal twist in the form of patois. However, the cultural differences were stark. Phrases like "getting into trouble", which in Jamaica might imply a serious legal issue, carried a different, more benign meaning in Britain. This linguistic and cultural shift contributed to her anxiety and heightened sense of caution.

Life in Britain also exposed Norma to systemic injustices. She recounts the struggles of many individuals from the Windrush generation, who, despite having lived in the UK for decades, faced the threat of deportation due to changing immigration laws. Norma's foresight in applying for British citizenship protected her from such a fate, but she remains acutely aware of the hardships others endured. Her career, which included roles in mental health, youth offending, and welfare rights, reflects her commitment to addressing social inequities and supporting vulnerable communities.

Norma's journey was not without its moments of joy and connection. She speaks warmly of a neighbour who taught her to knit, a skill she mastered to the point of completing intricate Aran designs. This neighbour, a mother of nine, embodied the resourcefulness and community spirit that characterised much of Norma's early experiences in Britain.

Today, Norma reflects on her life with a mixture of pride and lingering questions. Her acute sense of justice, once perceived as a negative trait, is now a source of strength and motivation. She remains critical of the systemic barriers faced by migrants but is also appreciative of the opportunities and connections she has found. Norma's story is not just about migration, it is about the human capacity to endure, adapt, and advocate for what is right.

The Transition Was Not
Only Physical it Was Emotional

”



Daphne Wells

Grenada

Place of Birth

1939

Birth Year



Full Interview

1958

Arrival in England

A Life Shaped by Faith and Perseverance

Daphne Wells James, born on March 24, 1939, in Grenada, grew up in a small community where strict values and religious teachings formed the core of her upbringing. The youngest of two daughters, Daphne's childhood was shaped by the disciplined guidance of her parents, particularly her mother, who maintained a firm hand in their household. She recalls that she and her sister were not permitted to go out late in the evening, as their mother believed strongly in keeping them close to home, ensuring they were raised with a strong Christian foundation. Church played an integral role in their lives, with Daphne and her siblings participating in activities such as prayer, the rosary, and celebrations surrounding Carnival - though the latter remained a somewhat fearful experience for Daphne due to the intimidating "jab jab" figures.

From an early age, Daphne assisted her parents in their family-owned shop, which sold essential goods like sugar, rice, and flour. The work was hard but integral to the rhythm of her daily life. She remembers weighing products and repackaging them from large sacks into smaller quantities, a task that instilled in her both a sense of responsibility and a work ethic that would guide her through life.

Although English was the primary language spoken in her household, Daphne also grew

up with Patwa, a reflection of the cultural richness of Grenada. Her strong educational foundation came from attending a convent school, where religious teachings were emphasised alongside academic subjects.

In the 1960s, at the age of 19, Daphne made the life-changing decision to move to the UK. She arrived by plane, a journey that was daunting yet exciting. Adapting to the cold British winters was particularly challenging, especially after the warmth of her home country, but Daphne was resilient. Her first job in the UK was at a boys' college, where she spent several years before transitioning to a career in healthcare. For over 20 years, she worked as an auxiliary nurse in a hospital, a job she found rewarding despite its emotional and physical demands. Daphne prided herself on her dedication to the patients, often going in to work despite feeling unwell, as she believed that the needs of others came first.

In addition to her healthcare role, Daphne held various other positions, including work in a factory, London Transport, and Greggs, a bakery chain. Throughout her career, she was fortunate not to face significant challenges, aside from the occasional encounter with prejudice early on in her arrival to the UK. Nonetheless, Daphne remained undeterred, focusing on her work and building a life in her new country.

Though Daphne's life in the UK was not without its struggles, such as missing the warmth of her homeland, she reflects on her journey with quiet satisfaction. Her son's wedding in Antigua stands out as one of her fondest memories, but on the whole, she prefers to focus on the present. Today, Daphne enjoys her life in the UK, surrounded by family, and remains content with the choices she made over the years.

I Never Went
Off Sick

”



Lessept Saunders

Jamaica

Place of Birth

1919

Birth Year



Full Interview

1954

Arrival in England

A Century of Resilience and Hope

Born on January 24, 1919, in Jamaica, just after the First World War, Lessept Saunders was inspired by his father's wartime stories of perseverance. Those tales ignited a determination within him to seek better opportunities and support his family. Life in Jamaica was challenging low wages and limited prospects made daily existence a struggle.

In 1944, during the Second World War, friends returned from England speaking of earning five pounds a week, a fortune compared to Jamaican wages. Les felt a surge of hope. Despite the daunting prospect of leaving his homeland, the promise of a brighter future propelled him forward. With courage mingled with anxiety and excitement, he embarked on a three-week voyage aboard the Origa, arriving in a war-torn England.

London in 1944 was ravaged by conflict. Buildings lay in ruins, people lived in half-destroyed houses. Yet, amid the devastation, Les witnessed an indomitable spirit. The resilience of Londoners inspired him, fuelling his own resolve to overcome hardship.

Settling in Croydon, he faced loneliness and cultural isolation. Though he spoke English, the dialect was different, and few people looked like him. Determined to connect and succeed, Les took additional English lessons. His unwavering dedication led him to a lifelong career as a male nurse at Queen's Hospital near Mayday Hospital.

Caring for patients from numerous nations, many scarred by war, was intense but

profoundly fulfilling. The gratitude of those he helped and the camaraderie with colleagues gave him purpose and belonging. Even when staff shortages meant working through the night, he embraced his role wholeheartedly, it was his calling.

After five years, in 1949, he returned to Jamaica, yearning for his roots. However, the lack of opportunities and inability to support his family forced a painful decision: to leave his beloved home once more. In 1950, he returned to England, and by 1955, it became his permanent residence.

Around 1975, Lessept moved to Hackney, near Dalston. Recognising the need for community, he became one of the founders of a local Caribbean community centre. Securing this space wasn't easy, they had to fight the council and overcome obstacles. But the effort was worth it. The centre became a sanctuary, a place of companionship and support-easing his loneliness and reinforcing his sense of belonging.

Through relentless challenges, the harsh weather, cultural differences, feelings of isolation, Les found strength in friendships, his fulfilling work, and staying connected to his heritage. Embracing diversity and finding joy in helping others, he navigated his new life with grace.

Now, at 106 years old in 2025, Les reflects on a century of transformation, from the ruins of wartime London to the vibrant, diverse city it is today. His journey was never easy, but the resilience learned from his father, the purpose found in service, and the support of community sustained him. His experiences teach that endurance isn't just about surviving hardships but finding meaning and hope within them.

Grateful for every moment, the struggles and the triumphs, Les's story is one of perseverance, adaptation, and the unbreakable human spirit. He hopes that sharing his journey inspires others to face their challenges with courage, seek connection, and find strength in themselves and their communities.

It Became My Home
Because I Did Like England

”



Howard Facey

Jamaica

Place of Birth

1951

Birth Year



Full Interview

1963

Arrival in England

Building a Future: Immigration and Work

Howard Anthony Facey was born on September 23, 1951, in Jamaica. At the age of 16, he made the life-altering journey from his homeland to London, joining his mother, who had moved to the UK earlier to work. In Jamaica, Howard had spent his early years with his grandparents, as his mother had come to England before he was old enough to join her. He and his brother made the voyage together, arriving in London at a pivotal time in their lives.

Upon arrival, Howard was struck by the stark differences in his new life. The family lived in a modest home in Wood Green, North London, where they endured the challenges of a basic lifestyle. Without central heating, they relied on gas meters and paraffin heaters to keep warm. However, despite the struggles, Howard recalls his time there fondly, finding solace in the community and his family.

His first job, secured with the help of his mother, was a significant moment in his journey. Working in a factory where parts for airplanes were made, Howard began to understand the work ethic and rhythms of life in the UK. His responsibilities included operating a capstan machine, a job that required precision and focus. He earned £5 for his first week of work, a modest sum that he dutifully shared with his mother. Over time, his earnings grew, and he would later work in various jobs, including furniture fitting and making lady's shoes alongside his mother.

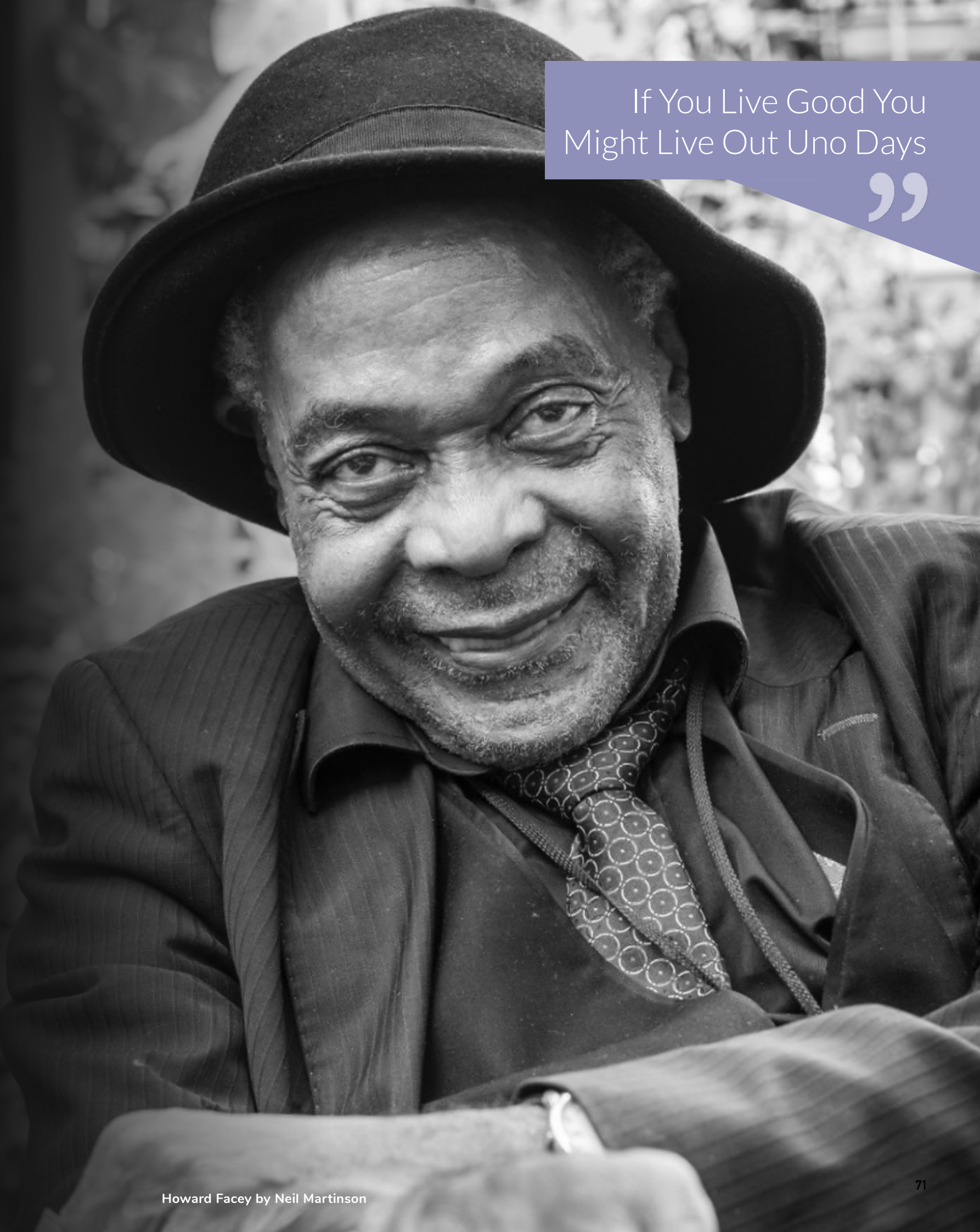
Howard's early experiences in London were marked by hard work and an eagerness to adapt. Despite a lack of formal education in the UK, Howard continued to learn and contribute to his community. His passion for tailoring, a skill he developed in Jamaica, stayed with him, and he would later apply it in his various jobs.

His social life also flourished, as he met his future partner at a local party. While his son, now 54 years old, would later face health challenges, Howard reflects with gratitude on the opportunities and family connections he built during those formative years.

Later in life, Howard moved into a facility where he enjoys more comfort and independence. He now has his own room with a new bed and access to his own bathroom. The facility offers him the peace and privacy he never had during his younger years in London. A particularly memorable moment in Howard's life was meeting Prince Harry, who once visited the facility. Although Howard didn't take a picture with the prince, he recalls the warmth of their encounter, including a letter the prince later wrote to him.

Reflecting on the changes in his life, Howard has seen the world evolve through significant events like war, the COVID-19 pandemic, and inflation. Yet, through it all, he has remained resilient, finding strength in his community, his work, and his family. Today, Howard's life is marked by a sense of peace, the comfort of knowing his health is stable, and the enduring support of those he loves.

If You Live Good You
Might Live Out Uno Days
”



Benjamin Gregory

Saint Lucia

Place of Birth

1947

Birth Year

1960

Arrival in England



Full Interview

The Transition From
the Carribean to the UK
Was Monumental



A Journey from Saint Lucia to the Heart of England

Born on 25th May 1947 in Saint Lucia, a Caribbean island known for its natural beauty and close-knit communities, Benjamin Gregory grew up in a large family of eleven siblings. His father was a shopkeeper, and his mother cultivated gardens, growing groceries and greens. Despite their hard work, his parents' livelihood provided more than sustenance - it fostered a sense of responsibility and connection within their household.

Gregory's early years in Saint Lucia were filled with the joys and challenges of childhood. School life, although not particularly remarkable in his memory, was a time of camaraderie and youthful mischief. Tragedy struck early, however, as he lost several siblings over the years, leaving only a few surviving family members. This deepened the bonds with those who remained, particularly his sister, with whom he shared a profound closeness. Her passing in 2023 marked a poignant moment in his life, as Gregory had recently visited her in April of that year.

In August 1960, as a young teenager, Gregory embarked on a journey that would change his life. Leaving behind his island home, he arrived in the UK via boat, settling initially in Forest Gate, London. The transition was monumental. "The difference is, I miss home," he reflected, "but when I get to England, I'd rather be in England." The opportunities he found in

his adopted country offered him a chance to build a new life, including the ability to buy a house which is an achievement he believed might not have been possible in Saint Lucia.

Upon his arrival, Gregory took up work on a building site, a common path for many immigrants at the time. He later transitioned to decorating, thanks to his brother-in-law's guidance, and eventually found his niche pressing garments. He specialised in jackets and trousers, a trade he enjoyed immensely. Despite encountering discrimination early on, Gregory's outlook remained positive. "At that time, English people were a bit funny towards Black people," he recalled. "But after a while, that died out." Hurtful remarks from coworkers did not deter him, instead, he persevered, focusing on his work and building a stable life.

Gregory's reflections on his journey reveal a man who embraced both his roots and his new beginnings. While he missed the familiarity and warmth of Saint Lucia, he recognised the privileges afforded to him in England. His life is a blend of two worlds: the vibrant, familial culture of his birthplace and the opportunities and independence of his adopted home. Over six decades after his arrival, Gregory regards England as home but holds Saint Lucia close to his heart, a testament to his enduring connection to his origins.

Betty Adeyemi

Nigeria

Place of Birth

1954

Birth Year

1988

Arrival in England



Full Interview

I Don't Hate Nigeria as a Country.
I Don't Hate The People.
But I Don't Like The Way
They Run the Government



Bridging Two Worlds: Betty's Path to Belonging

In 1988, Betty left Nigeria and arrived at Heathrow Airport, stepping into a new chapter of her life. Born on May 4, 1954, she had spent her earlier years in a country rich in familial warmth and natural abundance. Growing up in a close-knit community, Betty enjoyed a vibrant and supportive atmosphere, where family and traditions were deeply cherished. She attended school, later working in the Ministry of Housing, addressing public grievances. Yet, beneath the surface of her homeland's beauty lay systemic issues that troubled her deeply: government corruption, poverty, and a disregard for the welfare of both young and old.

"Nigeria is so blessed," Betty reflected. "Even if you throw seeds anywhere, they grow. But the government didn't care for its people." Once a nation with free education and healthcare, these services had deteriorated over the years, leaving many struggling. Despite this, Betty's love for gardening flourished in Nigeria, where she cultivated tomatoes and other plants in a communal space near her home.

The decision to move to Britain was driven by family ties, as her husband had already settled there. Though Betty had visited the UK before, her permanent move was a significant adjustment. Settling in Hackney, she quickly realised the cultural and demographic differences of the late 1980s. The area was far less diverse than it is today, but small moments of familiarity brought comfort. One such moment occurred at the airport when

she saw someone carrying a basket similar to one she had brought from Nigeria. "It was like a little piece of home," she recalled.

Betty's early years in Britain were far from easy. With children to support and a desire to ensure they received the best education, she juggled various jobs, including catering and working at the post office. She also faced challenges such as language barriers and racial prejudice. However, her pragmatic and determined nature helped her overcome these obstacles. "You can't dwell on difficulties," she said. "You just focus and do your best." Watching English films before her move had helped her adapt to the language, and over time, she learned to navigate societal biases with resilience.

Betty's strength was particularly tested when her husband passed away, leaving her to raise her children alone. Determined to provide for them, she worked tirelessly, ensuring they could attend university without taking on loans. Though these years were physically and emotionally demanding, Betty's dedication to her family never wavered.

Now retired, Betty reflects on her life with gratitude. Though health issues have limited her ability to volunteer as she once did, she finds joy in community activities, particularly the lunch clubs she attends. These gatherings provide her with companionship and opportunities to share in the warmth and kindness of others. "Everyone is so friendly," she said with a smile.

Elizabeth Augustine



St Lucia

Place of Birth

1939

Birth Year

1960

Arrival in England



Full Interview

“You Didn’t Know Your Neighbours,” She Recalled.
“They Minded Their Business, and I Minded Mine.”



Caribbean Roots, British Dreams

Elizabeth Augustine’s life is a testament to resilience and adaptability. Born on 20th June 1939 in Saint Lucia, a Caribbean island known for its stunning natural beauty, Elizabeth made a life-altering decision at the age of 20. On 9th March 1960, she arrived in the United Kingdom, travelling by boat, lured by the promise of work and opportunities in a land she had heard so much about.

Elizabeth’s early days in Britain were a stark contrast to the vibrant life she left behind. The neighbourhoods were unwelcoming, and neighbours often kept their distance. She attributes much of this to racial prejudice, a reality faced by many immigrants at the time. “You didn’t know your neighbours,” she recalled. “They minded their business, and I minded mine.”

Elizabeth came to Britain at the invitation of the Commonwealth government, a move influenced by Queen Elizabeth II’s visit to the Caribbean, which encouraged many to migrate. Jobs were scarce back home, and the UK was portrayed as a land of prosperity. Yet, the reality was different. “You thought the streets were paved with gold,” she said, “but they weren’t.”

Despite the challenges, Elizabeth wasted no time. Arriving on a Wednesday, she secured a job the very next morning, working at the renowned Cumberland Hotel in London. The hotel, one of the largest at the time, became a melting pot of Caribbean immigrants, offering camaraderie amid the struggles of a foreign

land. Starting at £4.70 per week for a gruelling 44-hour work week, her wages were modest, but she quickly received a pay rise to £5.

Housing was another hurdle. Sharing a small room with two others, she recalled makeshift living conditions where a cooker was stationed on the landing, and the bathroom was inconveniently located in the basement. Winters were particularly harsh, but Elizabeth was fortunate to have access to showers at the hotel where she worked.

Elizabeth’s migration story is not one of isolation. Her sister, who had arrived earlier, provided a vital support system, as did the broader community of Caribbean workers she encountered. While life in Britain required hard work and sacrifice, she persevered.

Reflecting on her experiences, Elizabeth admitted that she preferred the familiarity of Saint Lucia. Yet, returning home was not an option due to financial constraints. She stayed, adapting to her new reality with remarkable strength.

Her story encapsulates the experiences of many early Caribbean immigrants to the UK: the challenges of integration, the search for better opportunities, and the determination to make a life in unfamiliar territory.

Elizabeth Malcolm

St Lucia

Place of Birth

1935

Birth Year

1958

Arrival in England



Full Interview

Black Workers Earn Significantly Less Than the White Folks



Across Oceans

Born in 1935 in the idyllic Caribbean island of St Lucia, Elizabeth Malcolm’s story is one of perseverance, adaptability, and grace. The daughter of a farmer, Elizabeth’s childhood was shaped by the abundant natural beauty of her homeland. Surrounded by plentiful mangoes, avocados, guavas, and golden apples, she enjoyed a childhood filled with games like dominoes and checkers, and she fondly recalls the seasons of harvest that brought her family joy. Despite these comforts, her schooling was cut short when she was moved to another village, which disrupted her education. At the age of 12, she returned to live with her father, where she remained until embarking on a life-changing journey.

In 1958, at the age of 23, Elizabeth made the brave decision to leave St Lucia and journey to the United Kingdom, traveling by boat alone. She arrived at Victoria, stepping into a country vastly different from her own. Her initial years in Britain were marked by hardship, as housing for immigrants was scarce and often discriminatory. She recalls the small, cramped living spaces where a single room had to serve as kitchen, dining, and sleeping quarters, with outdoor toilets as the norm. “No Irish, no Black, no dogs” was a common refrain, highlighting the challenges faced by many immigrants of her generation.

Elizabeth first settled in Paddington, where she stayed with her sister. Over time, she moved through various London neighbourhoods, including Mile End and Hackney, eventually settling in Clapton. She found work in kitchens, hotels, and later in a factory making jewellery.

Though the jobs were not glamorous, they provided a means of survival. Elizabeth also recalls the inequities in pay, with Black workers earning significantly less than their white counterparts. Despite these struggles, she persevered, raising four children and seeing her family grow to include grandchildren and even great-grandchildren.

While Elizabeth adapted to life in Britain, she never forgot her roots. She missed the warmth of the Caribbean sun, the lush fruits of her homeland, and the sense of community. Though she enjoyed having friends and family around her in the UK, winter often brought memories of St Lucia flooding back. Over the years, she returned to visit her homeland frequently, reaffirming that “there is no place like home.”

Travel became a significant part of Elizabeth’s later life. She has visited places as far-flung as Australia, Bangkok, and Bali, with Australia holding a special place in her heart. Despite her advancing age, she embraces the memories of these journeys with enthusiasm.

Elizabeth’s life has been a testament to resilience and gratitude. Through the hardships of immigration, racial discrimination, and adapting to a new culture, she has emerged with a profound appreciation for life’s blessings. “Praise the Lord,” she often says, reflecting on her survival and the strength that has carried her through decades of change and challenge.

Laura Honore



Montserrat

Place of Birth

1940

Birth Year

I Love Going to Church.
I Still Do. I Do That Regular

”

1960

Arrival in England



Full Interview

Montserrat Roots, British Dreams

Laura Honore's began in 1940 on the island of Montserrat in the West Indies, she grew up in a large, close-knit family. Her parents, a labourer father and housewife mother, raised her alongside nine siblings, five boys and four girls. As the middle child, Laura played a significant role in looking after her younger siblings while her mother took care of the household. The family, though not affluent, maintained a self-sufficient lifestyle. They raised livestock, such as chickens and rabbits, and grew their own food, with no supermarkets to rely on.

Her community, though supportive, was small and isolated. The town was a place where women would sew their clothes, often relying on the skills of local seamstresses. Laura recalls that her mother made weekly trips to town, but these were limited and structured, leaving little room for roaming or leisure. As children, their time was largely spent in the home, with school and chores taking priority over play.

In her late teens, Laura left Montserrat to move to England. Her family initially settled in Edmonton, London, where she began a new chapter of her life. Reflecting on her upbringing, Laura acknowledges the loss of many cultural traditions. With African roots erased by the horrors of slavery, she believes her Caribbean heritage was formed through resilience and adaptation, rather than through the preservation of specific customs.

After arriving in England, Laura pursued a career as a typist, having been trained as a stenographer

in her youth. The skills she gained enabled her to find work as a junior secretary, which she did as a temporary position. She also took night classes to enhance her office skills, proving her commitment to personal growth. This period of her life was not only about professional development but also about adjusting to a new culture and environment.

Family remained central to Laura's life. She married and had a son, and her role as a mother deepened her appreciation for the value of self-reliance. During her pregnancy, she learned to knit and crochet, hobbies that became a significant part of her life. After retiring from work, knitting and crocheting remained passions, through which she continued to nurture both herself and others.

Throughout her life, Laura's motivation has been clear: to push herself and continuously improve. Her commitment to doing better, both personally and professionally, has been a driving force. Though not one for a bustling social life, she finds joy in quieter pursuits such as her regular church attendance and maintaining an active lifestyle. She exercises twice a week, a routine recommended by her doctor to alleviate sciatica, and she continues to find meaning in physical activity as well as her spiritual life.

In all, Laura Honore's journey has been one of adaptation, hard work, and determination. From a modest childhood in Montserrat to her settled life in England, she has lived a life characterised by personal growth, self-sufficiency, and a steadfast love for her family and faith.

Daphne Campbell



Jamaica

Place of Birth

1939

Birth Year

I Bless You and Guide You and
Keep You Encouraging You.
Thank You Jesus.

”

1960

Arrival in England



Full Interview

Quiet Strength

Daphne was born in Jamaica in 1939, the youngest of seven siblings. Her early years were shaped by the resilience of her mother, who worked tirelessly to provide for the family. Daphne's mother sold bananas, coffee, and other goods at the market, often returning home to prepare chocolate and other items for sale. Despite the challenges of raising seven children, her mother's determination left a lasting impression on Daphne.

The neighbourhood where Daphne grew up was one of cooperation and warmth. She fondly recalled a sense of unity among the community, where people supported one another. Her childhood was punctuated by simple pleasures: playing tennis and other games with friends, and always looking out for each other. Education was an important aspect of Daphne's early life, though she described it as strict. Teachers enforced discipline with methods that would be unthinkable today, yet Daphne valued the lessons she learned during those formative years.

In her early adulthood, Daphne made the life-changing decision to move to the United Kingdom, following in the footsteps of her brother. She travelled by plane, accompanied by a family member, and brought with her only the essentials, clothes and a few small belongings. Arriving in England, she was struck by how different life was compared to Jamaica. The houses, which seemed industrial at first glance, and the unfamiliar food were some of the initial surprises. Settling in wasn't easy.

Employment opportunities for immigrants at the time were limited, but Daphne found work and persevered. She spoke of the struggle to make ends meet, describing how jobs were often gruelling and poorly paid. Yet, she worked diligently for over two decades, contributing to her community and building a life for herself in this new land. Daphne's reflections on those years were tinged with pride

and gratitude for the opportunities she was able to seize, despite the hardships.

Though life in England posed its challenges, Daphne maintained her connection to her Jamaican roots. She cherished visits back to her homeland, describing the joy of picking mangoes from the trees and relishing the vibrant atmosphere.

Faith played a significant role in Daphne's life. A devout Pentecostal, she found solace and purpose in her church community, often attending conventions and gatherings. Her faith provided a foundation for her values and an enduring sense of hope.

As Daphne reflected on her journey, she expressed concern for the younger generation, observing how the cost of living and societal pressures had intensified over the years. Yet, her story is one of perseverance and strength, a testament to the resilience of a woman who, through determination and faith, navigated a life spanning continents and cultures.

Daphne's journey was also one of personal growth and transformation. Over the years, she not only adapted to the cultural changes she encountered in England but also embraced the new opportunities that came with them. She sought to better herself through continuous learning, both formally and informally, and became a strong advocate for education within her community. Daphne recognised the importance of empowering the younger generation, encouraging them to stay focused on their goals despite the obstacles they might face. Her life serves as a powerful reminder that perseverance, adaptability, and a commitment to self-improvement can lead to lasting fulfilment and success, no matter the circumstances.

Lawrence Peart

Jamaica

Place of Birth

1963

Arrival in England



Full Interview

Growing up in Jamaica
Was Quite Nice



Adapting to a New World

In 1963, Lawrence Peart left Jamaica to begin a new life in the United Kingdom. A young woman at the time, she had grown up in the vibrant surroundings of Jamaica, where family and play were central to her childhood.

Lawrence's early years were shaped by a close-knit family environment. She fondly recalls the games she played as a child, including marbles and hopscotch, which were typical pastimes for youngsters of her era. The simple joys of playing outdoors, climbing trees and enjoying the freedom of youth, were integral parts of her upbringing. Life in Jamaica, though filled with challenges, was a rich and fulfilling experience for Lawrence, who cherished the support and companionship of her family.

When she moved to Britain in her late teens, the contrast between the two countries was immediately apparent. Lawrence came to the UK not with her family, but after they had already settled here. Her husband had sent for her, and she made the journey alone, embarking on a new chapter of her life far from home. Upon arrival, she worked as a catering assistant, adjusting to the different pace of life in Britain, which she described as "completely different" from Jamaica.

While Lawrence did not continue her formal education in Jamaica, she quickly adapted to the demands of her new environment.

Her early days in the UK were marked by a combination of hard work and personal growth as she navigated the complexities of settling in a foreign country. The differences between life in Jamaica and Britain were stark, and Lawrence found herself adjusting to a new culture, language, and way of life. Despite the challenges, she managed to build a life for herself in the UK, eventually finding contentment in her role and surroundings.

Reflecting on her life, Lawrence is not one to focus on specific inspirations or role models. She credits her resilience to the experiences and support she found in her family and community. Over the years, she witnessed the changes in both Jamaica and Britain, noting how the lunch clubs and social services in her local community had evolved. The transition from basic meals brought from other places to freshly prepared food in the clubs reflected the broader changes in her life, moving from the simplicity of her childhood in Jamaica to the complexities of adult life in the UK.

Lawrence's story is one of migration, adaptation, and quiet resilience. She is a reminder of the many individuals who, like her, have come to the UK from all corners of the world, bringing with them unique histories and experiences that have shaped the country's diverse cultural landscape.

Mercy Oyibo

Nigeria

Place of Birth

1984

Arrival in England

1962

Birth Year



Full Interview



When I Was Having
My Children,
I Couldn't Go To School



Cultural Adjustments and Ambitions

Mercy arrived in the United Kingdom in 1984, at the age of 22, a journey that was both an opportunity and a challenge. Born on February 26, 1962, in Nigeria, Mercy's early years were spent with her family, including her father, mother, stepmother, and siblings. Her life in Nigeria was characterised by the warmth of a close-knit family, where she developed a passion for singing and cooking, hobbies she would carry with her to the UK.

The decision to move to the UK was not a choice she made freely, but rather a necessity. Her father, who was travelling to the UK for medical treatment, arranged for her to join him, and the two made the journey together. She had recently completed her studies at a teacher's college in Nigeria, but she came to the UK with the intention of continuing her education, particularly in banking.

Upon arrival in the UK in late January, Mercy was struck by the harsh cold. "It was freezing," she recalls, adding that it took some time to adjust to the cold and to life in a new country. She initially stayed in Dalston with her brother, sharing the cramped quarters of a single room. The experience of moving to a new place, especially one with such a different climate, was overwhelming. She remembers the difficulty of opening the door in the cold winter, sometimes waiting for someone to come and help.

Mercy studied Business Administration and briefly ventured into law and banking. However, her academic path was not straightforward. As she balanced her studies with family life, the demands of raising children meant that she had to put her education on hold. Despite these

challenges, she persevered, eventually completing her degree in housing law at the age of 50. It was an achievement she looks back on with pride.

Throughout her time in the UK, Mercy maintained strong ties to her homeland. She frequently returned to Nigeria, the most recent visit being in January 2024. Despite the distance, she remains close to her family, especially her mother, who still resides in Nigeria. Although her mother finds visits to the UK less enjoyable due to the lack of familiar faces and social connections, Mercy's own connection to Nigeria remains strong.

In the UK, Mercy has found both challenges and opportunities. She acknowledges that the weather and the cultural differences were significant surprises. Yet, she also speaks fondly of the good experiences she's had, particularly in her early years in the country. Now, after decades of living in the UK, Mercy reflects on her journey with a sense of resilience and gratitude, proud of the life she has built for herself and her family.

Mercy's journey, marked by both hardships and triumphs, has shaped her into a woman of incredible strength and resilience. Her experiences, from the cold streets of Dalston to the completion of her degree in housing law at the age of 50, have not only transformed her but have also inspired those around her. Through perseverance and an unwavering commitment to her dreams, she has overcome countless obstacles, including the pressures of family life and the cultural challenges of adapting to a new country. Her story is one of determination, and today, she continues to inspire others, showing that it is never too late to pursue one's goals and build a life of fulfillment, no matter the difficulties encountered along the way.



Setyra

Age:17

Borough: Waltham Forest

In the project I got the pleasure to assist and interview the Windrush generation. I enjoyed the project because I learned more about my own culture and heard a lot of compelling and passionate stories. I think the best moment was doing the activities with the elderly, they were very competitive and fun.



Samuel

Age:17

Borough: Hillingdon

Participating in lunch club visits to HCEO and Holly Street, as well as a seaside trip to Hastings and garden Party, I learned from elders' life stories about resilience and governmental injustices. The love and advice they shared was inspirational, especially from the vibrant Howard at HCEO, deeply impacted me.



Zainab

Age:17

Borough: Hackney

I participated in the interviews and I loved connecting with the elders and hearing their experiences moving/ growing up in the UK and my favourite moments were when the elders shared their happiness moments in both their home countries and the UK.



Adnan

Age:18

Borough: Bromley

I participated in taking interviews of the elders and keeping the elders entertained in the lunch club events.

One thing that stood out to me was how tightly bonded some of the elders were to the point where their colleagues remember incidents that they've forgotten about, this showed me how they've become reliant on each other because of all the hardship they've endured together in the past decades.



Aaya

Age:19

Borough: Hackney

The whole project was great to be a part of. I loved meeting the elders and learning about their struggles helped me appreciate the older generation on a greater scale. I also loved the seaside trip and Hastings art gallery visit. However my favourite part of the project was the garden tea party. Seeing everyone come together, enjoying food and music and getting to know one another was truly heart-warming.



Mahari Stiell

Age:16

Borough: Waltham Forest

In this project I participated in the making of the book by interviewing the elders and have conversations about their life and what they went through but most of the time I was helping the clubs with setting up and packing away and trying to help as much as possible in the kitchen and outside the kitchen with the tidying .



Ekponmwen

Age:16

Borough: Hackney

1. I participated by supporting elders in their lunch clubs and recording interviews
2. I enjoyed the trips we did with the elders in Hastings for example, and genuinely helping out in the lunch clubs
3. A favourite moment was when I almost got baptised in the seawater at Hastings because Mahari thought it was funny to try to push me into the water.



Edem

Age:17

Borough: Southwark

Recording personal histories was enlightening, offering a unique opportunity to delve into unfamiliar historical topics. The research expanded my knowledge of significant events and figures. Collaborating with diverse individuals enriched the experience as well as fostering teamwork and camaraderie. Overall, the project was both educational and socially rewarding.



Khadra

Age: 18

Borough: Barking and Dagenham

What I liked about the project/favourite moments that stood out:

I remember the first lunch club I attended at Holly Street. We were thrown into a new and intimidating environment, unsure of what to do. The team leader introduced us to the elders, and we made our way around the tables, conversing and learning about their inspiring stories during our visits to places like Chats, Hceo, and Holly Street. These interactions helped build rapport and gather rich stories for the research project. We deepened these connections through events organised by Voyage, such as the beach trip and garden tea party.

I learned that 'Silence' is golden and that retaliation isn't always worth it. The elders taught me to appreciate what I have, not be fixated on time, and to strive for my goals. One elder shared that they are their own motivation, and I will carry those words with me.

My favourite moment was presenting my piece, 'Silence Is Golden,' and seeing the audience's focus and reactions. Each gasp and laugh showed me that my words were being heard and had an impact, validating my hard work and courage. I had practiced for days in front of my siblings and friends, hoping it would go smoothly – and it did.

The Saturday sessions were something I looked forward to every week. The conversations, workshops, and games helped build my confidence and communication skills.

Voyage Youth
New City College - Hackney
Shoreditch Campus
Falkirk Street
Hackney, London N1 6HQ
Charity Number: 1068108

Silence is golden

By Khadra

Silence is golden.
Is silence golden?

When you come from a region that had
sung your culture,

"Your natural hair is beautiful."
"Passion. Admirable."
"Our pride and joy."

Your Mother would have beamed.

You believed them all,

"Ahh, I am admirable, beautiful even."
When you stepped off the boat,
You looked for the streets of promise,
The ones paved with gold
England.
Is it worth it?

The locals do not approve,
brushing past you on the street,
Moving away from you on the bus,
Wide scowls on their faces at your very
presence.

Sitting in silence,
Letting that be,
Not to be a victim,
But to rise above,

Utter turmoil within you,
There is this desire to unleash
Instead, you choose to be kind.
Silence, remaining golden.

The events continued,
It isn't easy hearing sleazy names,

"Black idiot!"
pure venom.
sweaty palms,
A red vision,

The need to defend,
to look the man in the eye,
And make your competence known.

"You're wrong: it is you who is the idiot."
Such words never come out.
Tongue tied.
"Prove it"

"I am black but I'm no idiot"

Skin colour cannot be changed,
The insult had felt rather strange,
a little out of range.

"Rise above."
The horse of reason had whispered,
"For silence is golden."
But. change needs a voice.
So, is silence Golden?

Poem shared by Khadra to 120 elders and guests.

Other young leader who volunteered their time at different stages of the books production.

- | | |
|----------------|-----------------|
| 1. Aisha M. | 7. Mahari S. |
| 2. Aleiya F. | 8. Maryam O. |
| 3. Bedirxan A. | 9. Melissa N. |
| 4. Claire N. | 10. Midula R. |
| 5. Evelyn T. | 11. Rogious W. |
| 6. Haezle C. | 12. Shamarah S. |

