

GENERAL SYNOD**Windrush Commitment & Legacy****Summary**

The Empire Windrush was one of a number of former troopships which travelled from the UK to the Caribbean returning serving British Commonwealth troops to their homes, and on the return journey bringing- at the appeal of the British government - Jamaican and other British Commonwealth citizens from the West Indies to the UK in order to help rebuild life in Britain after the Second World War.

Many Anglicans who came to England experienced shocking racism in parish churches, as well as in wider society; though many people were also warmly welcomed in churches, communities and across the workforce.

The celebrations of the 70th anniversary of the arrival of the Windrush were marred by the 'Windrush scandal' in which many British Commonwealth citizens were suddenly, wrongly, declare to have no right to have entered or to remain in the UK, due to the 'hostile environment' policy of the Home Office. Bishops spoke out about this terrible injustice in Parliament and in the press. This paper asks the General Synod to also look, see, and speak on this issue of justice which also happens to affect member of the Church significantly.

The Church, like wider society, has benefitted from the arrival of the people who travelled to the UK on the Empire Windrush in countless ways. And yet those people, and the generation who have followed them, now known as 'the Windrush Generation', are not represented in the Church's lay and ordained leadership roles in a way that reflects their contribution.

Motion

'That this Synod, commemorating in 2018 the martyrdom of the Revd Dr Martin Luther King, Jr., noting with joy the 70th anniversary of the arrival of the Empire Windrush liner in the United Kingdom in June 1948 bringing nearly 500 Commonwealth citizens, mainly from the Caribbean, to mainland UK; and the eventual arrival of approximately half a million people from the West Indies, who were called to Britain as British subjects to help rebuild the post-war United Kingdom:

- (a) lament, on behalf of Christ's Church, the conscious and unconscious racism experienced by countless Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) Anglicans in 1948 and subsequent years, when seeking to find a spiritual home in their local Church of England parish churches, the memory of which is still painful to committed Anglicans who, in spite of this racism from clergy and others, have remained faithful to the Church of England and their Anglican heritage;
- (b) express gratitude to God for the indispensable contribution to the mission, ministry, prayer and worship of Christ's Church in this nation made by people of BAME descent in the Church of England;
- (c) acknowledge and give joyful thanks for the wider contribution of the 'Windrush generation' and their descendants to UK life and culture in every field of human activity, including service across the Armed Forces and other services during and after the Second World War; and

(d) resolve to continue, with great effort and urgency, to stamp out all forms of conscious or unconscious racism, and to commit the Church of England to increase the participation and representation of lay and ordained BAME Anglicans throughout Church life;

to the greater glory of the God in whose image every human being is made.'

Background

1. The HMT Empire Windrush made voyages across the Atlantic returning troops to the West Indies on the way there, and bringing British Commonwealth citizens to the UK at the invitation of the British government on the return journey.
2. The journalist Amelia Gentleman has spearheaded work to publicise the scandal from the beginning, but has also worked tirelessly with individuals to advocate for them and publicise the wrongs committed by the UK Government. To paraphrase Amelia's helpful analysis of the context: On 22nd June 1948 The Windrush arrived at Tilbury docks in Essex carrying 492 passengers, the vast majority from Jamaica. Those affected by the Windrush scandal were part of a later wave of immigration from the West Indies that gained pace through the 1950s and 1960s until the government finally stopped this with the 1971 immigration act. (*The Windrush Betrayal*, Guardian Faber, 2019)
3. A parishioner and member of St Peter's, Walworth, Doreen Browne remembers the sudden need to apply for a British passport; which many did (542,000), as they were of course entitled to do so. A significant number did not however (57,000): some asked themselves why did they need a passport if they weren't going to travel anywhere? Why did they need to prove anything, when they had accepted the British Government's invitation to come legally to the UK and help rebuild the motherland?
4. The so-called 'hostile environment', a Home Office policy design to deter people from entering the UK illegally and to make it very difficult for people already in the UK illegally to lead a normal life, is a policy held by successive governments. It began with asking employers to check employees' immigration status and has reached as far as asking NHS staff to share patient data with the Home Office for enforcement purposes. https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmhaff/990/99006.htm#_idTextAnchor038

The 50th Anniversary

5. In April 2018, Bishop Michael Ipgrave summed up the bitter sweet nature that the Windrush anniversary celebrations had taken on due to the 'Windrush Scandal' caused by the Home Office's notorious 'hostile environment' policy: "As preparations are made to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the Windrush [the ship that brought some of the first migrants to the UK from the Caribbean], it saddens me greatly that people who have lived here [having arrived here legally as British citizens] their whole adult lives now face uncertainty and fear. These are individuals in their 50s and 60s who have contributed to society and may have never known a home outside of the UK."
6. This PMM aims to encourages Synod - as representatives of the Church - to *look*, like the prophets, at the reality of this injustice, and *see*. It is harder to empathise with people who are different from us. And yet that is what the Gospel calls us to do.

- a) **Lament:** To see the pain of the Windrush generation who, having been invited as British subjects to come and rebuild the post-war United Kingdom, experienced racism, fear and rejection, both in wider society and - perhaps most shockingly to us - in parish churches.
- b) **Solidarity:** St Paul tells us to 'Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep' (Rom 12:15). This simple, yet profound, definition of Christian solidarity is what inspired this motion. In his book *We Need to Talk About Race* (SPCK, 2019) Ben Lindsay accuses 'the White church' of failing to preach and speak out on issues of justice in general, which in turn often specifically affect black people and ethnic minority people disproportionately.

The Windrush Scandal:

7. This great injustice of our day came about due to failures in Government which subsequently led to resignations, the establishment of a Windrush Taskforce and promises of assistance with documentation and compensation. However, that whole process has been marked by a distinct lack of real care for those affected, including what the Bishop of Peterborough described in the House of Lords as 'very poor decisions on immigration made in the Home Office'.
<https://hansard.parliament.uk/Lords/2019-04-03/debates/AA8E3DD3-8386-447C-9063-CDE82A0278C4/WindrushCompensationScheme#contribution-60C11FC6-5D7C-4D45-805D-2772B0687B0C>.
8. I believe this exposes an inadvertent racism, an example of unconscious bias, in British establishment today, which the Church must also lament and challenge. In the House of Commons, when MP Diane Abbott introduced a debate on the Windrush Scandal (widely accepted as such by all mainstream parties), a government MP interrupted her to attempt to relate the Windrush Generation to 'the issue of illegal immigration, which is absolutely embedded within this whole debate'. This is, of course, simply not true, and is surely an example of extremely unfortunate unconscious bias (at best).
<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2018-05-02/debates/2EE1AB97-59E0-4924-AE57-459FA8811E4F/Windrush>
9. The Government Home Affairs Select Committee on the Windrush Generation gives this example of one horrific case:
<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmhaff/990/99005.htm>

In April 2018, The Guardian reported the case of an individual who arrived in London in 1972, aged 16. More than 40 years later, he was admitted to hospital with a brain aneurysm, where staff told him he may have to cover the £5,000 bill. While there, he lost his home because of his "illegal" residency status and he was ineligible for a bed in a state-funded homeless hostel so he was discharged to the streets. Eventually a bed was found for him, and he spent years trying to prove his residency, until in January 2018 the Home Office confirmed he had indefinite leave to remain.

10. In Nov 2018 Sajid Javid, the then Home Secretary, confirmed that at least 11 Windrush generation members, wrongly deported from the UK, had been found to have died. The Home Secretary confirmed that the total was likely higher, as others were uncontactable.
11. The Home Office subsequently admitted that although a wonderful 6000+ people have now received their papers proving leave to remain, of the 164 people who were wrongly detained or removed from the country, at least nineteen had died before officials were able to contact them to apologise. (Amelia Gentleman, *ibid.*)

Windrush & the Church of England:

12. There are Anglican Christians worshipping in parish churches today whose first experience of the Church of England was turning up at their local parish church and being told by clergy and laity alike varying versions of, 'The Baptist Church is just down the road.' Of those who persisted in seeking to worship within the Anglican tradition they had grown up with for generations, some were told they should sit at the back of church, some were even denied Holy Communion. We must acknowledge and lament the fact that this was due to the colour of their skin, their accent, their perceived nationality.

Doreen's story

Doreen Browne is a member of the congregation at St Peter's, Walworth. She and her family grew up as cradle Anglicans in Barbados. I asked her about her early experience in England in anticipation of this debate. Her story is shocking.

Doreen made the 14 day journey to join her Mother in the UK, in 1956, aged 16. After a move of home in 1961, a white neighbour invited Doreen's mother to go with her to St Peter's, Walworth. She took her to St Peter's for Sunday worship, but in Doreen's words, 'He [the priest] saw my Mum coming [...] and she just get to going up the steps, and he said "I'll have to ask the congregation." And he would give this woman [the white neighbour] the message, the same woman that took her. So he never gave her the message. And she never asked him, 'cos [the neighbour said] he could be a bit funny.

So Doreen's mother was barred from even entering the parish church of St Peter, Walworth, due to the plain fact of the colour of her black skin. Her friend stuck with her and didn't enter either: Christian solidarity. Doreen's neighbour took her mother to the nearby church of St Paul, Lorrimore Square, where they found a warm welcome, and a number of black people already worshipping in the church.

Doreen reflected on why her Mum might have felt unable to challenge the racism of the priest at St Peter's: 'In them days you were gonna complain to someone who was just like the person you were complaining about. [...] It would have been pointless.' But, 'She was fuming. She went, "the bloody hypocrite, he shouldn't be a priest".'

Doreen did eventually find a home in her own parish church, St Peter's, Walworth, when she moved closer in 1975, but: 'I never used to take Communion or nothing. I just didn't use to feel comfortable taking Communion, because they refused my Mum.' Eventually a later Rector (some 25 years later) encouraged her to take Communion and to become a Southwark Pastoral Auxiliary. Even now, though, Doreen sometimes doesn't take Communion on a Sunday, but does so on a Monday evening at the Said Mass. She mused: 'I did think about it, how a priest could do that. For years...' In the 1980s Doreen's mother did finally go back to St Peter's, before she died.

In the interview, Doreen describes the racism her mother, experienced in parish churches as 'very unfair'. In her mother's experience, 'It wasn't the congregation, it was him [the rector]!' How can we make sure this doesn't happen? '[They should] train some of them priests better, don't let them bring their dirty ways into the Church.'

13. Things are so much better today. And yet, we each of us have our unconscious bias which we must be constantly aware of.
- c) **Gratitude:** To see the amazing contribution made to the mission and ministry of the Church of BAME Christians with explicit thankfulness.
14. It isn't possible to quantify the contribution of the Windrush generation and other BAME Christians to the life and mission of the Church. Anecdotally, I have served in only two parishes, as curate of St Christopher's, Walworth for four years and as

rector of St Peter's, Walworth for over nine years. Both congregations, like many in London and other centres of Windrush communities, would be significantly poorer in numbers and in spiritual vibrancy without the presence of the Windrush generation and their children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

15. The Windrush generation have brought new life, energy, and growth to the Church over the last 70 years. Names include Bishop Wilfred Wood, the Bajan who became Bishop of Croydon, being the first black bishop in the Church of England; John and Peggy Denny who came from Barbados and Jamaica respectively, John becoming Mayor of Lambeth, as well as having served as a PCC member, and Peggy having served as Churchwarden, both at St John the Divine, Kennington in the Diocese of Southwark. Again, many are ordinary Christians whose names will not go down in history, but who have helped the Church to praise God and serve our communities in countless ways.

Case study: Bishop Rose Hudson-Wilkin, child of the Windrush generation.

Intro, from British Vogue (Jan 2020), to an article by Bishop Rose: "In her Hackney parish or as chaplain to the Queen and to the Speaker of the House of Commons, Rose Hudson-Wilkin has for 40 years been right at the heart of a changing nation."

<https://www.vogue.co.uk/news/article/rose-hudson-wilkin-first-black-female-bishop-uk>

Biography from the Diocese of Canterbury: "Rose was born and raised in Jamaica. She was educated at Montego Bay High School for Girls and later at Birmingham University. She trained with the Church Army and was commissioned in 1982 as an Evangelist; she later trained for ordination at Queens Theological College on their part-time course, ordained deacon in 1991, priested in 1994 and served her title at St Matthew's Church, Willenhall Road in the Diocese of Lichfield. For sixteen and a half years she served as a priest in Hackney (Holy Trinity with St Philip, Dalston and All Saints, Haggerston). In 2007 she was appointed as a Chaplain to Her Majesty the Queen and in 2010, she became the first female appointed to the position of the 79th Chaplain to the Speaker of the House of Commons. In November 2014, she took on the additional responsibility as Priest in Charge of city Church, St Mary-at-Hill near Monument." <https://www.canterburydiocese.org/rose-hudson-wilkin-named-bishop-of-dover/>

- d) **Acknowledgement:** To see what the Windrush generation have contributed to UK life in every sphere.

16. The Windrush generation brought passion, flare, loyalty, a determination to work and make a difference to community life at every level. Famous names include the jauntily self-named Trinidadian musician Lord Kitchener, Sir Trevor McDonald, Moira Stewart, Professor Stuart Hall. But of course most were ordinary people making their small but significant contribution. Here is just one detailed case-study:

From Southwark Heritage blog (edited version):

<https://southwarkheritage.wordpress.com/2016/06/20/sam-king/>

Sam King MBE (1926 – 2016) was born in Jamaica in 1926. He served as an RAF aircraft engineer during the Second World War (having responded to a Royal Airforce advertisement in The Gleaner newspaper for volunteers) and until 1947. King sailed back to Britain on the Empire Windrush in June 1948. King decided to rejoin the RAF and served again until 1952. During that time he and his brother, Wilton became the second Caribbean family to buy a house in Southwark. Having endured racism when he first arrived looking for 'digs', he was again to receive the same treatment when he applied for

his first mortgage in 1950. He was turned down and told to 'go back to the colony'. Undeterred he went directly to the home-owner selling the property, who was so appalled by the treatment King received he personally gave him the mortgage. Thus, King owned his first house in Sears Street, Camberwell.

As an ex-serviceman, King was able to find employment in the postal service, working his way up to Postal Executive for the South Eastern district. King married Mavis Kirlew in 1954, at Emmanuel Church in Camberwell. Later in life he became active in politics, joining the Labour Party in the 1970s, getting involved in the Race Committee in the 1980s and becoming a Southwark Councillor, serving Peckham's Bellenden Ward, in 1982.

King was elected Mayor of Southwark in 1983 in recognition of his community work which included among other activities, his work within schools, helping to set up the first West Indian carnival. As Southwark's first Black mayor King received death threats from the National Front who objected to his position. These threats became world news and King began to receive support from as far as South Africa.

Sam King was awarded an MBE from The Queen in 1998 for services to his community.

- e) **Resolution:** To see the urgent need in today's Church to create an environment and culture in which every single Christian disciple can follow their vocation under God without barriers due to discrimination of any kind.

A Church for All People:

17. Objective 9 of the Archbishops' Council Objectives 2017-2020 commits the Council to working 'to be a Church that can provide a home for all people in England'. This includes the 2018 aim: 'to ensure that race and class and disability are embedded in strategic approaches to Evangelism and Discipleship'. There is also work in place to achieve better representation of BAME Christians through the leadership of the Church. Numbers of ordinands self-identifying as BAME rose from 4% in 2016 to 8.4% in 2019. This is an encouraging trend and shows what can be achieved through investment and intentionality.
18. However, for many people in our parish churches change looks and feels very slow. Youth Club members (majority black) at St Peter's on the day of the anniversary of the martyrdom of the Rev Dr Martin Luther King last year told us that nothing was said in their schools about the achievements of black people a) outside of Black History Month, and b) other than in sport and music. One said passionately, 'We hear nothing of black [achievements] only of white [achievements]'. Shockingly, most of the young people attend Church of England secondary schools in central London.
19. The Windrush Scandal could only have happened in part due to a catastrophic lack of the ability of a white-majority Government to 'see' a scandal which happened to black people as a direct – if unintended result – of a Government policy, the 'hostile environment'.
20. It is a matter of principle that the Church of England a) for the sake of justice and standing with the oppressed, the vulnerable, and b) in recognition of the significant contribution that the Windrush generation and their children and grandchildren have made to the life and mission of parish churches and chaplaincies across England and over the generations, **should** seek to hold Government and the Church to the highest possible standards in all areas of unconscious bias, not least racism

What am I asking of Synod?

21. To show our support for our bishops in speaking prophetically on issues of racial justice (in this case) in the Church and the world, and to encourage all preachers and teachers in the Church to do the same locally.
22. To shine a light on the work of CMEAC which has often gone under-noticed.
23. To request Diocesan Boards of Education to engage schools to fully engage not just with Black History Month, but with the histories, achievements and cultures of all pupils in diocesan schools in a sustained way in the overall curriculum.
24. To commit to a realistic, strategic, planned, urgent programme of unconscious bias (UB) training, using the train the trainer model, focussing especially on:
 - a. current parish clergy, who are gatekeepers for the discernment of many forms of lay and ordained ministry
 - b. key people, lay and ordained, in diocesan structures who hold positions of influence
 - c. everyone training for lay and ordained ministry
25. To explicitly recognise the 'I cannot be what I cannot see' phenomenon, due to which many BAME people in churches are not having their gifts recognised and fostered
26. To heed Bishop Stephen Cottrell's recent call for bishops to be more imaginative and strategic in making appointments that will bring greater diversity and better BAME representation (with all of the Archbishops' Council Article 9 factors in mind)
27. To find ways of genuinely celebrating black history, and the many cultures of the Church with sustained and deep engagement in our Church life and the life of our Church schools.

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