

History

Life in the 1960s - Lesson 4 of 6

The Experiences of Britain's Migrant Communities

What kind of stories can be told about the Sixties?

Mr Wallace



- As the 1960s began, the Government - and some parts of society - became more uncomfortable with the **Nationality Act** letting in migrants from West Indies and Asia, and wanted to limit it to white migrants from 'old Dominions' like Canada and Australia.
- Immigration became more of a concern to people as the **economy got worse** from 1965 onwards and many people looked for someone to **blame**.
- One form of discrimination came in the form of **colour bars**, where people from black or Asian backgrounds would be refused service, housing, jobs, etc.



Source A: William Naltey, who served in the RAF and stayed in Britain after the war, recalled: “Just after the war was over, I was on a bus and there were two service people in front of me, one a woman. And she was saying “Isn’t it about time they went back to their homes?” and it was the first time that it hit me that, you know, that people were putting up with us, that they didn’t really want us, but we were a necessary evil. But, apart from that, I didn’t experience much problems with people.”



Source B: Eric and Jessica Huntley: “I think what happened was that we come from the West Indies, where working-class people had middle-class ambitions. So we would go to school - it still happens now - we would go to the schools and our children would tell the careers officer, “I want to be a doctor”, “I want to be a lawyer”, “I want to be an architect”. And they would look at you in amazement, because when they look at your family background - your father’s a bus driver or carpenter or whatever - and as far as they’re concerned, no way.”

The historian David Olusoga said the main feeling migrants experienced in Britain was ‘disappointment’.

1. What evidence is there that William Naltes and Eric & Jessica Huntley would agree?



Commonwealth Immigrants Act 1962

Limited migration from Commonwealth nations, specifically aimed at non-white nations. Called 'cruel and brutal anti-colour legislation' by Hugh Gaitskell, the leader of the opposition in Parliament.

5

Race Relations Act 1965

Outlawed discrimination on the basis of race or ethnicity in public places. For example, it stopped shops, restaurants or bars from refusing to serve black customers.

Race Relations Act 1968

Made it illegal to refuse housing, employment or public services to people on the basis of race or ethnicity. For example, this stopped landlords being able to refuse to rent houses or rooms to black tenants.



Commonwealth Immigrants Act 1962

Race Relations Act 1965

Race Relations Act 1968

2. How could we argue that the Government was supportive of migrants?

3. How could we argue that the Government was not supportive of migrants?



Enoch Powell

- Powell was a Conservative MP who was speaking out on the issue of race and immigration.
- His 'Rivers of Blood' speech in 1968 against immigration was one of the most controversial of the decade, and remains so today.



Source C: From the 'Rivers of Blood' speech, 1968.

"We must be mad, literally mad, as a nation to be permitting the annual inflow of some 50,000 dependants. **It is like watching a nation busily engaged in heaping up its own funeral pyre.**"

4. What can we learn from this quote about Powell's beliefs?



- After the speech there were many reports of **attacks on migrants** by people who shouted support for Powell.
- One of these was a Christening in the Midlands where a black family was attacked with knives, and the attackers were shouting 'Enoch, Enoch.'
- Powell was immediately **sacked by the Prime Minister** and was called 'racist' and 'disgraceful' by The Times newspaper.
- Thousands of ordinary people agreed with him. His local newspaper received over **35,000 letters in support**.
- An opinion-poll suggested **74% of people agreed** with him at the time.

5. Powell's comments split opinion - how can we tell that some supported and some opposed him?

