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In Search of a Better Life:

Perspectives on Migration

from the Caribbean

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Forty-and-One Years On: An Overview of Afro-Caribbean Migration to the United Kingdom

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June 22, 1988, marked the fortieth anniversary of large-scale labor migration from the Caribbean to the United Kingdom. On that same date in 1948, the S.S. Empire Windrush landed at Tilbury Docks with 492 Jamaicans on board. Needless to say, their coming was deemed tremendously newsworthy, as witnessed by these reports, "Jamaicans arrive to seek work. . . . Among them are singers, . . . pianists, boxers and a complete dance band . . ." and "[there] were law students, dockers, potential chemists and scientists, who had left their homeland because of the difficulties of getting employment there."

The mirror effect of this lack of employment opportunities in Britain's Caribbean colonies was the extreme labor shortage in the Metropole at that time. With this in mind, the London Evening Standard greeted these extra hands with the headline, "WELCOME HOME," and went on to say, "Officialdom, at both government and local levels, moved swiftly to make the Jamaicans feel welcome and find them accommodation and work. Jobs were found immediately for 202 skilled men; the others did not have to wait long."

The above, however, is grossly misrepresentative of the underlying feelings and ultimate general response of the British government and people to the economic implosion of black labor. The ensuing large-scale immigration to Britain served to expose various latent contradictions in the society at both the ideological and practical levels. This immigration also exposed the many inconsistencies in the nation's attitudes to the issue of race. The presence of large numbers of black labor migrants forced a reevaluation of British political ideologies. According to Rex and Tomlinson:

During this period [of black immigration] there was a slow and painful abandonment of ideals in the face of rising racial tension. Notions which would have been dismissed as morally disgraceful by nearly all parties in the early 1950's became the unspoken ground assumptions of the most respectable politicians and leading writers by the end of the 1960's.⁴

Blacks on their doorstep were certainly a different thing than blacks four thousand miles away, and the humanitarianism that Britain so boastfully claimed to have been behind the final abolition of slavery was sadly lacking when the descendants of the slaves finally came home to mother. Again quoting Rex and Tomlinson, "The actual contingencies which the [black] settlement created, produced responses which were, perhaps, latent in the structure of British society, but which were at odds with the ideologies of conservative imperialism, liberalism individualism, and international socialism"—ideologies that were instrumental in informing the philosophical debates during the shaping of the British nations.⁵

This chapter examines, first, the socio-politico-economic factors surrounding the implosion and incorporation of Afro-Caribbean migrants into the British economy. In an attempt to locate the views of migrants within the spectrum of migration debates, some ethno-biographical material will be used, this taken from a study done by the author in the West Midlands in 1984. This will help to bridge the gap between theoretical discussions and the perceptions/experiences/stories of the migrants. Second, by looking at various theoretical debates and raising sometimes "controversial" views, we will attempt to come to grips with the basic problems of migration when it relates to groups of people who are perceived to be extremely different from the natives.

DEFERRING TO PRAGMATISM: IMPLOSION OF COLONIAL LABOR DURING THE WAR

Caribbean immigration was not as laissez-faire as contemporary writers had assumed. During the war, the British government decided that, despite labor needs, black people should be kept from British shores. According to Sherwood, "The Colonial Office sent secret telegrams to all the Colonial Governors on 24th December 1939, telling them that it is not desired that non-European British subjects should come here for enlistment."⁶

This directive, however, could not be nonnegotiable, due largely to Britain's labor-starved condition as the war progressed. More significantly, strict adherence to this directive could have led to mass labor unrest and political upheaval in the colonies on a scale previously un-

known because, by 1939, much discontent existed, fueled by large-scale unemployment occasioned by the worldwide Depression.

Moreover, discontent within the colonies might well have shifted from their "home governments" to the mother country had Britain continued to refuse to recruit colonial labor, thus fanning the flames of the desire for independence. Lord Moyne may well have had that in mind when he wrote to the secretary of state for employment in September 1941:

For political reasons, I attach great importance to the proposal [to bring over West Indians]. The people of the West Indies are eager to take an effective part in the War effort but so far it has not been possible to give them much opportunity, and there is a danger of the spread of frustration and "unwantedness."

Could it be then that Britain, deferring to pragmatism, took action that would act as a panacea to her "wards"? Whatever the reason, shortly after that letter, labor began to be recruited from the West Indies into munitions industries mainly in the North, where there were more of "their kind." It was assumed that injecting these people into the labor force would not cause major dislocations, which seemed inevitable had the migrants gone where no indigenous blacks lived. On a more cynical note, however, Sherwood suggested that, "given the documented difficulties Blacks in the area historically faced, the 'experiment' of importing even a small number of West Indian workers would prove a failure and hence no more would need to be brought to the UK."⁸ Despite the deterring effects such placements were meant to have, the very familiarizing experiences they gained, together with legislative changes in Britain's immigration policy, meant that the die was irretrievably cast for further migration to Britain at the end of the war.

EXPLAINING AN ANOMALY: THE 1948 BRITISH NATIONALITY ACT

With Britain's obvious aversion to importing black labor, how then were West Indians able to enter the country in increasingly large numbers in the post-1948 through early-1962 period? The answer to this lies in the anomalies inherent in the British Nationality Act of 1948, which—by default—granted to all Commonwealth citizens the same legal rights accorded to all British citizens.

Prashar, in his work on British nationality law, indicates that "under the existing Imperial Act of 1914, everybody born within the allegiance of the Crown in any part of the Empire was a natural born British subject. This so called 'common code' had been intended to confer equality of citizenship throughout the Empire."⁹ To a certain extent, both

the Imperial Act of 1914 and the 1948 Nationality Act were enacted specifically to enable Britain to keep a hold on parts of her dominion where attempts were being made to establish their "coming of age" as nations, thus breaking the British imperial hold. In conferring British citizenship on existing and former colonial subjects, these acts were intended to circumvent citizenship policies of independent countries, thereby rendering them impotent in cases where former colonial citizens wished to claim British citizenship. According to Prashar, the Commonwealth citizenship conferred in 1948 meant that "citizens of independent countries like Canada or India, or British dependencies like Hong Kong, or Britain herself, are all alike 'British Subjects' or 'Commonwealth Citizens' (whether their governments wish it or not!)." ¹⁰ Commonwealth citizens, therefore, who wished to activate their right to the privileges of British citizenship could do so without any kind of referral to their own governments. As Prashar further stressed:

the very interchangeability of the expressions "British subjects" and "Commonwealth citizens" and the use of the word "British" to describe a citizen of an independent Commonwealth country have tended to confuse Parliament, the press and the general public about the real meaning of British citizenship. ¹¹

It was these citizenship constructs that enabled people from the Anglo-Caribbean regions who still held colonial status to enter Britain.

Bearing in mind the lengthy and continued reluctance to admit black colonial subjects into Britain, one could be forgiven for questioning the rationality for the expansiveness of the act. This questioning can, however, be dispensed with by considering, first, that the most immediate contemporary concern was to enable Britain to maintain some hold on "acceptable" former colonial citizens—mainly Canadians—who, given the privilege of having dual citizenship, might be relied on to uphold British interests in the future.

Second, if the British had overtly excluded their black colonial citizens, it would have been too reminiscent of Nazi racism, against which they had just inflicted a crushing defeat. In addition, such a policy could have speeded up liberation struggles in areas where Britain still wished to maintain a stranglehold, though in the resource-drained Caribbean, independence would have been willingly conceded if imperial protocol had not demanded a more orderly retreat.

Third, legislation is not irreversible; it can be repealed or amended. This was the considered recourse with which Britain dealt with the anomaly created by the immigration of blacks to the country as a direct result of the 1948 British Nationality Act.

WAR RECRUITS—THE PRECURSORS OF WEST INDIAN MIGRATION TO THE UNITED KINGDOM

By emphasizing the postwar period, many writers failed to give significance to the West Indians who went to work in Britain as members of the war recruitment groups. Their going broke the psychological barrier that prevented most potential labor migrants from the Caribbean from considering England as a possible place to seek work. These recruits were instrumental in paving the way for others to follow when normalization occurred. In addition, a rarely mentioned fact is that these recruits were the first West Indian migrants to enter Britain in large numbers to seek work. Many who enlisted did so because of a basic desire to fulfill economic needs, therefore becoming the precursors of the labor migrants.

Douglas Manley stressed in 1955 that the "discovery of Britain as an outlet for migration is the most important feature of the War period."¹² His father, Norman W. Manley, emphasized, as prime minister and minister of development in 1960, the contribution of war recruits in terms of their effect on the employment level in Jamaica:

With the outbreak of World War II in 1939 came a substantial amount of relief from the heavy pressure of unemployment. About 10,000 men volunteered for the Services and of these about 7,000 went overseas, mainly into the Royal Air Force. ¹³

War volunteers contributed to the sending economies by reducing the unemployment level and by increasing the supply of foreign exchange and contributing to the well-being of those left behind by their remittances of money and goods.

FAMILIARITY BREEDS DEMYSTIFICATION

While in the United Kingdom, many recruits worked in coal mines and in areas close to industrial centers such as Birmingham. These recruits were able to familiarize themselves more fully with everyday life in England because they were in regular contact with civilians. When they returned home, they could relate to friends and relations their experiences in Britain and, importantly, could inform people about the availability of jobs. (So great was the labor need, in fact, that many refugees were encouraged to stay and help in the reconstruction program.)

Due to the slowness of the demobilization of West Indians after the war—in 1948, three years after the war's end, a troop ship with 200 demobilized Jamaicans on board was just preparing to leave England—these men were conversant with the often-heated debates taking place in Parliament regarding the country's dire need for labor. They were

aware that several members of Parliament had pleaded for a change in the law regarding alien immigration, which would allow an easier flow of people into Britain. Though relatively small in numbers, war recruits were instrumental in helping to break down the mystique surrounding Britain by acting as "agents of diffusion." They were the pioneers of West Indian migration to the United Kingdom and, as British subjects, did not perceive that they had problems in obtaining employment, although many writers and indeed the recruits themselves claimed that the racism that was unleashed against them during the 1950s and the years that followed was partly cloaked during the war.

The following is an extract from the 1984 West Midlands Interview Data (WMID) recounting the encounters with racial prejudice by recruits during the war:

As West Indians when we came here first . . . I will never forget that . . . about three or four old ladies asked us if we were prisoners of war! But I put it down to a lot of ignorance.

We had a hard time down there. . . . They never use to coloured and even when you get your pass on weekends and you go out . . . you are a stranger into a place and if you ask for directions before you'd get shown . . . they would run away from you! Oh yes, ah not telling you no lies! Well, you feel lost! As you go along you find that it never improve. We couldn't understand why they acted that way because we thought these people knew about the West Indies . . . as we been taught about England . . . all the coal fields and things . . . all day long we've been hearing about coal fields in school and the different counties in England, and when I came here and found that the majority of the people at the time don't even know where the West Indies is.

I'm telling you, it was very tough and we got to break barriers down, just by going out night after night until people get use to us.¹⁴

So aggrieved did these recruits feel about their treatment in England that, according to WMID respondent Mr. Marks, there was "a big trouble" when the Norwegian ship in which they returned reached Jamaica:

Being as the lads was that roughly treated up here [in the United Kingdom], they said they going to have it the other way when they land in Jamaica. . . . I'm telling you what I know! . . . So when they get to find out they [were] going to start a riot on the boat, the captain turn the boat back and . . . couldn't come into Kingston because a lot of them would not have got demobbed. . . . They did want to jump the boat and go right to their home.¹⁵

It is almost inconceivable that these returning soldiers would not have informed people about their adverse experiences in England. Whether those listening would have been able to interpret the meaning, however, was a different matter, especially when, unlike black Americans, the

majority of Afro-Caribbean people had never themselves experienced overt white racism, either as rural workers or in a modern urban/industrial context. This is true because the majority of them, unlike their slave forefathers, did not come into direct contact with white people. Mr. Downs, another of the WMID respondents, was in Jamaica at the time the recruits returned and later traveled to England to seek employment. I asked him whether he was aware of racism before he came to the United Kingdom and he said no and then told the following story:

He was walking downtown one day when he saw a large crowd of people, and they were making so much noise as they laughed that he went to see what was going on. In the middle of the crowd was a soldier who had obviously recently returned from England. The soldier told them how English people drank many cups of hot tea. At that, the people laughed loudly because for someone living in a tropical country such as Jamaica, the thought of people drinking several cups of hot tea was certainly something they found hilarious. The soldier then went on to talk about how they asked him if he had a tail and whether people in his country lived in trees. At this, people almost fell about with laughter!¹⁶

When asked whether he did not feel a sense of unease about this and didn't the listeners interpret this to be racist, Mr. Downs said they did not understand. Like the many cups of tea, this was put down to the quaintness of the English and to their ignorance. The majority of West Indians did not associate racism with Britain, and they were not prepared for it in the way they would have been had they gone to the United States and seen racism in practice. The Jamaicans, in short, did not know how to deal with racism when they encountered it—especially in a British context.

RELUCTANT BONDING—UNITED KINGDOM CAPITAL AND BLACK LABOR

Three months after being demobilized in Jamaica, WMID respondent Mr. Marks was back in England. He had received £50 from the Jamaican government but, like many others, no land, although, according to him, some men got as much as 20 acres and a house. He contacted a lawyer but then decided to return to the United Kingdom. When asked why he had decided to come back to England, bearing in mind the dissatisfaction he had previously experienced, he replied:

Because you mostly in the camp . . . among soldiers, you don't know what civvi street life is like . . . 'cause it is entirely different . . . and you don't know what you going to put up with in civvi street. . . . You would never know what most of the people [are] like.¹⁷

The passengers on the Windrush were to have a taste of what "civvi street" would be like while they were still on the Atlantic Ocean. Sam King, one of the returnees, reported:

As we got closer to England there was great apprehension on the boat because we knew the authorities did not want us to land. . . . We heard on BBC News that if there was any disturbance on the immigrant ship, HMS Sheffield would be sent out to turn us back. I saw a man crying over the side because he thought we would be turned round. We heard there was consternation in Parliament and that newspapers like the *Daily Graphic* and the *Express* were saying we should be turned back. On the boat there was sadness about this. . . . We knew we were not wanted.¹⁸

Despite Britain's obvious reluctance to encourage immigration of these labor migrants, however, with their legal access assured, it was inevitable that the postwar economic expansion in Europe would act as a magnet to people from less prosperous regions of the world. As Peach points out, "It is not that poverty is new in the South, it is that industrial prosperity, on its present scale, is new in Northern Europe."¹⁹ Further, developments in the twentieth century that gave rise to the internationalism of fast, relatively cheap information and transport technology meant that the process of bonding labor to capital was effected more swiftly since the last world war. The returning demobilized recruits in 1948 were closely followed by what might be termed "peer group" recruits. As time progressed, the migration of dependents and single women swelled the ever-increasing ranks from the West Indies.

Laissez-faire governmental response continued to be more apparent than real. Unknown to would-be migrants, the British government instructed their colonial governments to apply delaying tactics in an attempt to deter the free flow of migrants from the black-peopled colonies. Furthermore, even before the introduction of work permit conditions, Britain sent out instructions that passports should be issued only if proof of employment were available.²⁰

These migrations to Britain, as well as being indicators of economic deprivation in the migrants' homelands, must be juxtaposed with Britain's chronic need for manpower and the legal and moral rights of Caribbean peoples as British colonials and later as Commonwealth citizens to exploit this for their own gains. In a way, the migration of large numbers of colonials to the metropolis must be seen as the final stage in the colonization process. The colonized capitulate completely to the political, economic, and psychological domination of the colonizer. This is one of the most serious aspects of colonialism. It is possible that at this stage, to quote Mabogunje:

In place of traditional self-confidence, the people [are] reduced to a state of imitative dependence, a highly degraded state associated not only with

an inability to provide themselves adequately with the material means of sustenance but also with the loss of cultural and psychological integrity.²¹

By the time mass migration begins to take place from the periphery to the center, the immigrants often feel gratitude for being allowed to "use" the metropole for their advantage, thus often experiencing a strong sense of obligation toward the core—at least initially. Despite immigration, however, the migrants are still pawns and, through various anti-immigrant restrictions, overt and otherwise, they are controlled by the ultimate power of the core to bring in labor and expel it at will.

SETTLEMENT

From the 1940s to the mid-1960s, at least, a period of contradiction existed. At the beginning of the 1940s, black workers found themselves in demand in factories where their labor contributed to the war effort, but, even so, employers and coworkers often resisted their presence.²² The color bar, according to Little, also meant "the refusal of lodgings, refusal of service in cafes, refusal of admittance to dance halls, etc., [and] shrugs, nods, whispers, comments, etc., in public, in the street, in trams and in buses."²³

As labor migrants, West Indians were given the worst jobs at the lowest pay and had to live in low-grade inner city housing—many of them in neighborhoods that had been slums long before the workers entered the country. For example, the city of Birmingham, which attracted a large number of Afro-Caribbeans because of its desperate labor needs, was regarded as being in urgent need of a housing program long before the inflow of postwar labor migrants.

A study undertaken by the Bournville Village Trust in 1941 stressed that 64 percent of Birmingham's 268,608 dwelling houses were of pre-1914 construction. In 1938, the medical officer of health had reported that "17,500 houses were unfit for human habitation and ought to be demolished within the next five years." The study went on to stress that

many unofficial observers would regard this figure as too low. On a broader definition of the term "unfit for human habitation," there can be no difficulty in justifying some such number as 50,000 to 70,000 dwellings as being ripe for demolition as soon as the necessary houses can be built to replace them.²⁴

In 1955, local authorities in the United Kingdom had estimated that 853,000 units were representative of the total of unfit houses in their wards. By 1967, however, a housing survey of England and Wales reported that in Birmingham alone, "30,000 families are on the waiting list, and 6,500 families apply each year. Over 50,000 people are overcrowded,

over 40,000 homes are unfit for human habitation, and nearly 60,000 households have no access to a hot water tap."²⁵ From this we may judge that slums were forming at an alarming rate, certainly faster than suitable housing could be erected.

On a national level, the situation was similar—and in places even worse than Birmingham. As late as 1966, a Labour party white paper stated, "In Great Britain some three million families still live in slums, near slums, or in grossly overcrowded conditions."²⁶ The paper further stressed that to rectify the severe housing shortage, 3,700,000 houses were needed immediately and that an additional 180,000 houses would be needed each year. The severity of the national problem was emphasized as well in the 1967 housing survey of England and Wales, which indicated that no less than 5.5 million people lived in houses "unfit for human habitation." Further, an additional 13–14 million people lived in substandard housing—some requiring demolition. In short, "40% of dwellings in England and Wales were either totally unfit or substandard, or lacking amenities."²⁷

Into this situation came the postwar migrant laborers. The shortfall between supply and demand, and the fact that there was no attempt to organize housing for the immigrants, resulted in "New Commonwealth" migrant workers experiencing some of the worst effects of inadequate housing. As this situation became apparent and the need for government action evident, it was used to fuel racist allegations, due to the tendency to equate macro housing shortages with perceived micro welfare requirements. Thus Grieve's assertion on the homeless in London during the early 1960s has universal relevance:

When the homeless become a topic for public discussion, accusation and counter-accusation, there is debate and speculation as to whether the homeless are "feckless ne'er do wells" or "ordinary decent Londoners". There are echoes here of the Victorian insistence upon the distinction between "deserving" and "undeserving" poor. The research team found that the homeless were more likely to be decent than ne'er do well, but, in any case, there is little point—or humanity—in attempting to separate the victimised from the feckless and unvirtuous if the object is to help one but not the others.²⁸

Social destitution, as is universally the case, had little to do with individual fecklessness. That the housing "problem" was exacerbated with the arrival of postwar labor migrants is a reflection of the short-sightedness of the local and national governments in maintaining an adequate house building/renewal program. This had been the case from the previous century. What is more alarming, however, is that conditions for black people have not improved in any significant way—more than

40 years later. They have been consistently discriminated against with regard to access to council housing stock.

As they faced discrimination from private landlords, many Afro-Caribbean migrants, through their imported practice of "pardners" (informal money-saving schemes), were able to raise down payments on low-grade housing, much of it due for demolition. Unfortunately, unlike previous immigrants starting out this way, many black labor migrants have not been able to achieve upward mobility to escape the ghetto. Indeed, Karn has commented that several "inner-city home owners live in housing conditions considerably worse than those in the worst council housing stock."²⁹

LABOR MARKET EXPERIENCE

On entering any labor market, most immigrants, especially those from a rural background, lack an awareness of and, indeed, a commitment to the specific types of work available in an industrial society. For many, as we have noted, this migration to foreign labor markets must be seen as pragmatic bids to raise money for economic enhancement back home. To some extent, therefore, it is true that—in the earliest stages of migration—it is "a job" and, more importantly, "the remunerations" from it, that are of greatest value. This does not mean that migrant laborers make conscious decisions to accept the worst type of jobs available in the receiving country. What it does mean is that they are usually ignorant of the specific labor market dynamics; many believe they would at least be able to obtain the kind of work they did back home, if not better.

When, however, these migrants are faced with the realities of the type of work available to them as black, powerless workers in the United Kingdom, it is possible that in the short run, while returning home is still regarded as a viable ambition, the adverse effects of alienation and anomie could be counterbalanced by the very temporary nature of their existence. For example, unlike indigenous British workers, the migrant can suspend notions of work-related prestige and job satisfaction until returning home. Of more lasting relevance is the fact that even while still in the core country, the immigrant can gain prestige if the focus is removed to the periphery where the actual or anticipated material achievement of the work effort is realized. Thus it is not uncommon to hear individual Afro-Caribbean migrants refer to their "many acres of land back home," "ten-apartment house back home," or to the fact that they "come off better table" than someone who is perceived to be of "lower origin," yet in the United Kingdom appears to have done comparatively better than the commentator. Until "mere existence" begins to take on a settlement nature, the very transitory nature of the migrant's existence often necessitates a curtailment or deferment of social re-

quirements and obligations. It is this ability to defer gratification that contributes to their elasticity, rendering them more suited than indigenous groups to meet immediate needs in the labor market. At the same time, though, they can be more easily segmented and more easily exploited.

Integral to most accusations about immigrant groups during their presettlement period is the belief that they will inevitably form a cheap source of labor and compete against existing host groups for jobs. This argument finds greatest expression in localities where, due to declining or transitional industries, fears—based on real or imagined factors—are ever present.

A common feature in British industrial evolution is the failure of indigenous groups to identify the process of industrial change. People such as Mishan believe that the injection of New Commonwealth labor migrants delayed the introduction of new technology to the detriment of the country.³⁰ Intriguingly, however, Duffield, in his work on Indians in the foundry industry, emphasized this false generalization about New Commonwealth immigrants. He stressed that whereas indigenous groups were reluctant to leave their old skilled and semiskilled jobs in declining industries,

[as] a general rule, immigrant workers were absorbed as a part of the process of change and modernisation. Their social role was not, as conventional theories suggest, to help maintain backward production methods. Modernisation created many new manufacturing and service jobs—jobs which, although some were not particularly pleasant, had not existed before.³¹

This procedure led to de-skilling of indigenous, as well as imported, workers. This phenomenon of mechanization accompanying sectional de-skilling is a recurring feature in capitalist productivity methods. Black workers, like their indigenous counterparts, were de-skilled; on entry they were restricted to the lowest paid sectors of the employment market and, as noted by Brown, this is still very much the case today. He emphasizes that, among other inequalities, black workers are congregated in the most vulnerable service areas of employment, are the most prone to adverse fluctuations in the trade cycle and the resultant unemployment; are more likely to work night shifts; and earn proportionately much lower wages than their white peers.³²

ORGANIZED LABOR AND BLACK MIGRANTS

Technological change facilitated a connivance of union and management to subjugate migrant laborers. Duffield emphasized that

from the late 1940's the foundry unions were able to impose a new skill hierarchy upon the mechanised forms of production then developing. This hierarchy mapped out in advance the social places that Asian workers would be forced to occupy. From this perspective, the arbitrary standards and spurious technical thresholds created by labour bureaucracies and used to oppress workers in general, become an essential and organic mechanism of racial oppression.³³

Antiblack sentiments have been greatest during periods of economic decline or in transitional stages in industrial development. These are often viewed as justified antimigrant labor sentiments, "legitimized" as being the attempts of workers to safeguard themselves against capitalist exploitation through the phenomenon of imported labor. Consequently, throughout British immigration history, trade unions have often been in the vanguard of anti-immigration abuses.

Analyses of trade union responses to black imported labor have been approached from different theoretical perspectives. On the one hand there is what might be identified as a class structural approach. This is based on the premise that it is the requirements of a capitalist economic system that encourage the formation and exploitation of various strata within the society, with black people forming at least a substrata, if not the lowest level. What is inherent in this system is the apparent need for each stratum to relate parasitically to those below for its own well-being. Thus writers such as Castles and Kosacks³⁴ and Miles³⁵ emphasize that the class perspective is germane to understanding the position of black people in the European trade union movement. Through the real or perceived built-in competition in capitalist modes of production, capitalism creates factions among the many sections of the proletariat, and through a divide and rule strategy renders them more easy prey for exploitation.

On the other hand, there is what might be termed a race relations approach, which suggests that British society is innately ethnocentric and racist and that trade unions, like all other institutions within the political economy, are inevitably permeated with these characteristics. This view maintains that it is only by catherizing itself through education and, more importantly, through legislative measures to deter discrimination, can black people ever obtain equity with the wider society.

Needless to say, neither of the above approaches is totally exclusive. What is of relevance here is the fact that trade unions have consistently failed to defend black workers and have often been in the forefront of antiblack practices. Thus a study by the Greater London Trade Union Resource Unit points out that

the experience of Black trade unionists within the labour movements is often a reflection of the experience of Black workers within employment

as a whole. Black people are more likely than white people to be unemployed, or if in work to be clustered at the lower ends of the scale of pay and power. As trade union members, even though a higher proportion of Black people join unions than white people, they are less likely to be represented at senior levels of union structure, and their particular struggles are often ignored.³⁶

According to Wrench, the trade union movement has failed its black members through "a general lack of awareness of the issues of race and equal opportunity and the particular circumstances of ethnic minority members, which may not manifest itself as racism but in effect lessens the participation of Black members in the union."³⁷

Until 1955, both the General Council and the Trade Union Congress (TUC) appeared to ignore the whole area of immigration, discrimination, and racism. That year was a watershed because a TUC resolution for the first time condemned racial discrimination. This move, however, seemed to spring from a desire to incorporate in order to control. Members were concerned that immigrants would form a pool of cheap labor and thus undermine trade union bargaining power.

Despite this positive action in 1955, trade unions, through their mouthpiece of the TUC, were at best strangely silent and at worst openly obstructive during the immigrant maligning and legislatively restricting period running from the 1960s through the early 1980s. Initially, the general response of the TUC to racism within the unions was that this "would be best overcome by immigrants increasing their efforts to integrate."³⁸ In the same vein, the TUC opposed both the 1965 Anti-Discriminatory Race Relations bills and the 1968 Race Relations Act, stressing that "voluntary organizations such as itself and the CBI [Confederation of British Industry] should supervise such integration rather than the state."³⁹ In the same year, however, they did support the Commonwealth Immigration Bill, under the Labour government, though they did not speak out against the 1971 Tory Immigration Act. (The latter was devised to restrict the entry of blacks into the United Kingdom.)

In 1973, the TUC approved a resolution to call on a future Labour government to repeal the 1971 Immigration Act. It was never repealed, but, by approving this resolution, the TUC, in actuality, recognized the effects of racism on blacks and also recognized that the unions and, more importantly, the government (rather than the disadvantaged groups themselves) had an obligation to assist in eradicating racism. Two years later, the TUC established an Equal Rights Sub-committee and a Race Relations Advisory Committee. Previously, race relations concerns were dealt with by the international department, implying that

the problems and solutions were external to Britain, rather than emanating from internal policies and practices.

From the late 1970s to the early 1980s, the TUC took on a more positive antiracist stance as a result of the National Front's political actions, evidenced by local union activities and electoral victories. Through the publication of their Black Workers Charter in 1981, the TUC Workbook on Racism in 1983, and the TUC/CRE (Congress for Racial Equality) Code of Practice for Trade Unions in 1984, the organization appears to have accepted its responsibility to stand against anti-immigrant and racist discrimination.

Despite this, there is no doubt that there is a long way to go before black trade unionists can feel confident in the knowledge that they will obtain equality of opportunity through the traditional labor organizations. The intransigence on the part of indigenous trade unions has resulted in factionalism as black workers have resorted to caucusing among themselves to safeguard their own interests.⁴⁰

Any concessions and changes in union policy today in support of black workers were achieved either through the unions' bid to incorporate blacks in a further attempt to subjugate them or, more importantly, through the struggles of black workers themselves. These unions have consistently failed to examine existing rules and procedures that are discriminatory to black workers—rules such as the "last in, first out policy," as well as union policy to support the tenure of the black member whose job is at risk in a dispute involving two members. Thus in cases of race or gender abuses where the laws have been contravened, the unions often end up supporting racist or sexist perpetrators on the grounds that their jobs are at risk. Further, by failing to utilize the imported expertise of migrant labor trade unionists, British trade unions have inadvertently restricted progress of trade unionism and radicalism generally.

A BID FOR ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE: AFRO-CARIBBEAN ENTREPRENEURIAL INVOLVEMENT

Generally, the involvement of Afro-Caribbean people in business in the United Kingdom has not attracted much research attention until fairly recently. This increased interest must be seen in the context of the government's attempt to turn the country into a nation of small businesses to combat contracting industrialization. There is a tendency to compare the seeming "great success" of the Asians with the "underachievement" of Afro-Caribbean people in the area of business. Education, business expertise, and "natural ability" are often held as the main factors responsible for the perceived supremacy of the Asian in busi-

ness. The educational achievement levels of the two groups show that whereas 15.2 percent of the Indian men possessed post "A" level General Certificate of Education (GCE) professional and graduate qualifications, among the general population and the Afro-Caribbean population, the figures were 8.7 percent and 2.6 percent, respectively. Of the Afro-Caribbean women, 10.2 percent had achieved this level. This was 0.7 percent higher than that of Indian women and seven percent above that of Afro-Caribbean males. Several studies have identified factors in the British educational system as partly responsible for this situation.⁴¹

If formal qualification is a measure of one's ability to succeed in business, the data cited here show that Afro-Caribbean men are most destined to fail in business. Ward and Reeves, in explaining the apparent leadership of Asians above Afro-Caribbean people in the business world, referred to the 1971 Census figures, which highlighted Asian supremacy in qualification and positional attainment. Nineteen percent of the Indian males were employed in the "administrative, managerial, professional, and technical" category, compared to 4 percent for the Afro-Caribbean males; in "clerical, sales," the figures were 12 percent and 4.1 percent, respectively.⁴²

Table 3.1 outlines the most recent statistical analysis of the employment categories of the various immigrant groups in Britain in 1986. While the figures reveal that Afro-Caribbean people are still lagging behind "Asians" and white groups in the top employment echelons, there was, nevertheless, an appreciably noticeable upward mobility when compared with the 1971 figures. It must be stressed, however, that while there is obviously room for hope, a large number of black migrants are achieving this mobility within ethnic enclave enterprises, and this cannot therefore be used to measure the degree of equitable incorporation of black workers in the society as a whole.

Other factors believed to contribute to the relatively poor business performance of Afro-Caribbeans compared to Asians include the fact that the former number approximately one-third of the latter population in Britain. Thus, in terms of controlling sections of the market through specific ethnic demands, the Asians are at an obvious number advantage. While this thesis may accurately describe the contemporary situation, which can be explained partly through geographical settlement—both in terms of work and residence—language, and ethnic encapsulation, to gain long-term credibility, it needs to assume that retailers have a monopoly over buyers in their own ethnic groups, that monopoly control cannot be effectively penetrated by "nongroup" people, and that for the long-term survival of the business, cultural demands will remain inelastic.

Entrepreneurship is not new to people from the Caribbean. Tables 3.2

Table 3.1
Percentage Distribution of Employment by Race and Sex of Workers 16 and Over, 1984-86

Category	West Indian & Guyanese		Indian		Pakistani & Bangladeshi		White	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Professional Employers & Managers	3	0	13	4	5	--	7	1
Other non-manual	4	2	17	5	13	--	19	8
Skilled manual	15	55	17	42	9	--	18	53
Semi-skilled manual	47	5	33	13	39	--	37	8
Unskilled manual	21	30	16	32	28	--	13	21
	9	7	3	3	5	--	4	8

Source: Labour Force Survey, 1986: Series LFS No. 6 (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1986).

Table 3.2
Entrepreneurial Activities in Jamaica of West Midlands
Interview Data Respondents, 1984

Type of Activity	Males (N=24)	Females (N=21)
Baking	2	1
Butchering	1	-
Cabinet making	3	-
Carpentry	2	-
Cook (Chinese food)	1	-
Dressmaking/sewing/ embroidery/tailoring	2	8
Farming/agriculturalist/ cultivator	16	2
Higglering/paper bag making	-	4
House painting	2	-
Kindergartden teacher	-	2
Pipefitting	1	-
Roof shingle making	1	-
Stone masonry	2	-

Source: West Midlands Interview Data (1984).

and 3.3 show that by far the majority of migrants from the 1984 West Midlands Interview Data had taken part in various entrepreneurial pursuits at some stage, both in the Caribbean and in the United Kingdom. The complexity of motivating forces underlying the unmistakably high involvement of the WMID respondents in small proprietorships is worth exploring, due to its potential for micro- as well as macroimplications. There is a notion that the ambition for independence, which a small business seems to confer, is somehow basic to human nature; thus entrepreneurial pursuits are deemed to be natural human responses. An extension of this idea could be that because migrants are often among the most enterprising section of any society, they enter the receiving country already imbued with entrepreneurial zeal. Consequently, one could logically expect them to become involved in any activity, including small businesses, that they believe capable of aiding their bid for capital accumulation and—for many—quicker return home. It could be further argued that the entrepreneurial pursuits listed in the tables are in line with a tradition of peasant and artisan proprietorship common throughout the world. In these cases, they are often purely pragmatic bids for economic survival in the midst of depleted resources and economic and social underdevelopment.

Table 3.3
Outcome of Entrepreneurial Activities in the United Kingdom of West
Midlands Interview Data Respondents, 1984

Type of Activity	Males (N=24)	Females (N=21)	Outcome*
Grocery shop (full-time)	2	2	F
Barber (full-time)	1	-	S
Bakery (1 full-time; 1 part-time)	2	-	F
Off License (financial partner)	2	-	F
Holiday Magic (part-time)	2	-	F
Market stall holder (full-time)	-	2	S
Home sewing (intermittently full-time and part-time)	-	2	U
Part owner of house	1	-	S
No entrepreneurial activity	4	15	-

*S=Successful

F=Failed

U=Unable to determine

Source: West Midlands Interview Data (1984).

The involvement of WMID respondents in one-person activities is due to a number of complex interrelated factors comprising the need for economic subsistence in the absence of alternative employment outlets. There is undoubtedly also a strong desire to be one's own boss or to be involved in innovative activity.

Forty-two percent of the male respondents became engaged in entrepreneurial activities in the United Kingdom, compared to an overall total of 75 percent while in Jamaica. The Jamaican involvement, however, showed an even division between those who were involved in full-time proprietorship and those involved on a part-time basis. The lower U.K. involvement nevertheless indicates that full-time entrepreneurial activities (17 percent) exceeded part-time (12.5 percent). Of the U.K. entrepreneurs, 12.5 percent were not actually involved in using their labor to work the capital but instead had invested money while they themselves were engaged in other labor pursuits. This straight "capitalist" tendency cannot be explained in terms of traditional working-class proprietorship; such clearly speculative attempts to make money without personal labor input are more akin to the petit bourgeois method of capital accumulation. This validates the view that attempts to localize and predict attributes and behavioral norms of particular groups may be

conceptually flawed when applied to specific groups, especially for migrant workers, who are often classified as appendages, and unwelcome ones, of the indigenous working class. While in terms of remuneration and vulnerability to exploitation, it is difficult to differentiate them from the working class, their heritage as rural land-owning peasant farmers and artisans, owners of factors of production, controlling the rhythm of work, as innovators in the ways in which they earn their living and in several cases employing others, mean that their aspirations and actions are often not strictly working class, despite professed loyalties. It is, therefore, not surprising, but must be seen within their tradition, to find migrant laborers purchasing properties, even as members of cooperatives, in their attempts to exploit money-making possibilities.

Entrepreneurial activities were undertaken by 29 percent of the female WMID respondents. Of this total, 19 percent were engaged on a full-time basis, while 10 percent worked full- and part-time intermittently. These figures contrast greatly with female respondents' entrepreneurial activities prior to emigration from Jamaica. There, 43 percent were engaged in entrepreneurial activities. Of this group, 24 percent reported they were fully self-employed, while 19 percent claimed partial self-employment. The females were involved in stereotypical activities such as setting up a grocery shop, holding a market stall, and sewing at home.

Scrutiny of each individual business run by the interview respondents in the United Kingdom reveals that only three—the barber and the two bakers—could be termed specifically “ethnic” enterprises. The bakers produced hard-dough bread, buns, patties, and so forth, specifically for the Afro-Caribbean market, although increasingly the products were purchased by other ethnic groups as those people became more adventurous in their choice of food. In the same way, the barber specialized in cutting Afro-Caribbean hair, predominantly males; he did however boast that he had white clients also, including, he emphasized, a doctor from the hospital close to his shop.

When questioned about the outcome of their activities in the United Kingdom, 80 percent of the males said their businesses had failed, while only 2 percent could boast success. Of the females, 33 percent claimed failure, while another third said it was difficult to determine the level of success. Women who sewed for private individuals, for example, received irregular payments, making it necessary for them to seek alternative forms of work on an intermittent basis. Each market stall holder in the sample felt that her business was successful. One of them sold clothes, and she attributed unqualified success to her endeavor. The other sold Afro-Caribbean food and, although she was successful, she pointed out that at times she found it strenuous to make a living in competition with white market stall holders who also sold “ethnic” food.

She felt they often resorted to undercutting methods, thus contributing to her lack of progress.

Lord Scarman believes that black business development can be a panacea for many of the wrongs suffered by blacks in Britain, whether they experience a sense of underachievement, alienation, or racism. In the Scarman Report, he observes:

The encouragement of Black people to secure a real stake in their own community, through business and the professions, is in my view of great importance if future social stability is to be secured. . . . I do urge the necessity for speedy action if we are to avoid the perpetuation in this country of an economically dispossessed Black population. A weakness in British society is that there are too few people of West Indian origin in the business, entrepreneurial and professional class.⁴³

Scarman's views are increasingly repeated, especially in the strong capitalist climate of Prime Minister Thatcher's Britain. The government has been encouraging the population at large to “set up on their own” to combat unemployment. For Afro-Caribbean people, the pressure to prove their worth has never been more intense, and the medium of business is the chosen testing ground. Some Pan-African adherents and sympathizers also argue that it is only through separate development of a strong economic base that black people can begin to redress the negative power relationship between themselves and the larger, predominantly racist white society. Black people have become caught up in the desire to display “black success.” However, this cooptation of Thatcherite ideology that business success is a measure of individual group worth implicitly results in the acceptance of the converse, that inability to display overt business success is a sign of individual or group failure.

Apologetic black people and their “liberal/socialist minded” white supporters, on the other hand, are quick to point out in defense that blacks from the Caribbean have not had a tradition of the type of individual capitalism practiced in most advanced economies and that forms of cooperative capitalism might be more successful. Here, they argue, black people would be able to develop their own capitalist institutions without having to be controlled by, or compete with, white or Asians.

Today's call for individual responsibility and self-determination is made by the government in response to this era of postindustrial decline. Like its birth, the decline of industry will cause intense social distress through economic dislocations. Some of these are evidenced in the phenomenon of “a divided nation,” whereby in Britain there are regional pockets of obvious material wealth juxtaposed by others in advanced stages of industrial urban decay.

The nineteenth-century predecessors of Thatcher's government were mindful of the potential for social unrest caused by the existence of a

situation of rich juxtaposed by poor inter- or intraregional variations. Thus, while philosophizing to validate the right not to become their brother's keepers, they also devised laws to protect and uphold the sanctity of property. In any eventuality, state compulsion was to be effected in an attempt to get people to shoulder their own responsibilities. Consequently, the 1834 New Poor Law was enacted. By this piece of legislation, the government assumed the barest responsibility for social welfare—this to be administered only when would-be recipients had been totally degraded by the ravages of poverty. The extent of relief and the conditions under which assistance was given further dehumanized the individual to make the deterrence more effective.

Why this preoccupation with the past century? The agenda has been set by the present Conservative government, and it is crucial to understand the ramifications of this for black people, particularly for Afro-Caribbeans, who form a virtual subclass in British society. Capitalism of the nineteenth century—for which Mrs. Thatcher so longs—was ushered in by the "Christian" capitalist pioneering entrepreneurs of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, aided by a mass of resources Europeans were able to accumulate through militaristic expropriation. Their economic pursuits were goaded on by an intensity that only strong emotions such as fear could instill—fear that underachievement or failure was a sure sign of God's dissatisfaction, whereas success was a sign of divine approval. Such approval could be gained only by good works within the individuals' specific "calling." This latter part is of particular relevance, for it was this that should pacify those who, despite hard and laborious work, were unable to reap similar benefits that the "business person" reaps. If these persons could not achieve, then God was displeased with them or they were striving outside their "calling." It was opportune for the capitalists and the government of the day to have the people accept these doctrines. While, according to Marx, they acted as an opiate against the harshest realities of poor people's existence, they were also a protection mechanism for those who were making conspicuously large profits against a backdrop of intense economic and social hardships for the majority of the people.

IMMIGRATION AND "NATION" POLITICS

The politicization of racism is a phenomenon that certainly existed prior to the fourth decade of the twentieth century, when large-scale labor migrations of "New" Commonwealth citizens to Britain took place. Racism, however, is often cloaked, partly because of the way in which students of various academic disciplines have tended to name the symptoms rather than the disease itself. Prejudice and xenophobia are usually discussed as though they were "natural" human reactions and are

usually referred to in isolation from their effects on recipient groups. This abstraction of the debate from the resultant effects tends to dull the impact of the knowledge that immigrants are often subjected to vile abuses and inhumane treatments.

In the same vein, notions of nationalism are often used to explain or excuse the behavior of sections of the host group toward an incoming group. Again, nationalism is seen as some kind of tangible inalienable commodity with advantages accruing to owners of the particular nationality. Nationalism, however, is a many-dimensional construct having implications for "in" as well as "out" groups.

Within British geographical boundaries, the move from a feudal, pyramidally structured society where the monarch and the ruling elite formed a small peak of privileged ethno-centric (culture-centric) group to a more egalitarian society was achieved through lengthy struggles as people wrestled to be among the deference-receiving groups at the top or simply to obtain a reasonable level of subsistence. This struggle has continued throughout most of Britain's historical development, with varying degrees of tension. These internal struggles are no less than micro and regional ethnocentric sparrings based on the groups' experiential notions of culture. Sumner has been credited with being the first to define ethnocentrism as a

view of things in which one's own group is the center of everything, and all others are scaled and rated with reference to it. . . . Each group nourishes its own pride and vanity, boasts itself superior, exalts its own divinities and looks with contempt on outsiders.⁴⁴

The stratified nature of British society and the levels of exploitation inherent in capitalism provide the perfect opportunity for nationalism to be intermittently redefined, both with reference to the various groups within the country's geographical boundaries and to external groups as well.

Prevailing ideologies of nineteenth-century Britain enabled poverty and attempts by the poor to relieve themselves of capitalist exploitation to be defined as forms of cultural degeneration and therefore potentially disruptive to the status quo. This gave credibility to the penal punishment of transportation as a temporary banishment that allowed "nationals" to retain their "rights to British soil" from afar, reclaimable when they had regenerated themselves culturally by exhibiting tangible economic results through enterprising activities or labor. Ethnocentrism maintained, therefore, that for poor British nationals, incontrovertible residential rights were not automatic, despite "ownership" of citizenship accorded by ancient rights—*jus soli* (by virtue of being born on British soil).

Internal micro and regional ethnocentrism sets a precedent for reactions to "out groups," in cases of macro-ethnocentrism and racism. Macro-ethnocentrism compares and grades "out groups" according to values placed on such things as clothing, language, and methods of production.⁴⁵ Thus, both the Irish and Jews suffered from macro-ethnocentrism on their entry into nineteenth-century Britain. Each came into British society as a subclass, and there was undoubtedly a notion of cultural superiority underlying their reception. The *Report on the State of the Irish Poor in Great Britain in 1836* stressed:

The Irish emigration into Britain is an example of a less civilized population spreading themselves, as a kind of sub-stratum, beneath a more civilized community; and, without excelling in any branch of industry, obtaining possession of all the lowest departments of manual labor.⁴⁶

Of the Jews, White commented in the 1890s:

The typical foreign immigrant we wish to exclude is an incapable; he belongs to no trade union; he is the person who makes the lives of the Jewish Board of Guardians a burden; he speaks no English, learns no skilled trade, and is destitute of qualities that enrich civilized communities.⁴⁷

In other words, these groups had nothing to offer and should be excluded, or at least separated from, the host groups to prevent the "spread" of degeneration. There is also no doubt that the language of racial supremacy featured very strongly in the responses to Jewish and Irish immigrants of the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries; these groups were seen as being at a lower evolutionary stage than the indigenous population. Similar, and stronger, sentiments were later expressed in postwar years, when Britain's great need for imported labor attracted black excolonial labor.

When differing physical features, especially skin color and other biologically determined features, are involved in group interaction, the effects of macro-ethnocentrism become more virulent and are usually referred to as racism, the latter regarded as a continuum of the former. Preiswerk and Perrot quote Albert Memmi's definition of racism as "the valorization, generalized and definitive, of real or imaginary differences, which profits the accuser to the detriment of his victim in order to justify his privileges or his aggression."⁴⁸

There is no doubt that ethnocentrism is an integral part of racism and, as we have seen in relation to the earlier nonblack immigrants to Britain, the newcomers were often abused through racist language. Nevertheless, the anti-Irish and anti-Jewish reactions were examples of ethnocentrism, not racism. Racism, inflicted by Europeans on other (i.e., black) groups, is usually based on skin color and facial features.

Reactions against the Irish and Jews were in some measure similar to those experienced by black immigrants in the postwar years. However, the more ethnocentrically different immigrants are perceived to be, the greater will be the reaction against them. The Irish and Jews are not so physically identifiable as the black immigrants; consequently, in time they can be absorbed into the society, thereby escaping some of the most overt forms of racism. For black immigrants, however, even if they desired complete assimilation, it would not be possible—except for generations of mixed breeding, an option seriously considered during the early European occupation of Australia. (This was only one "solution" to the aboriginal "problem," another being hunting them as wild animals.) In the "civilized" world of the 1960s Britain, the law would deal with this problem.

Thus, since the 1950s, a series of political debates and the enactment of laws have resulted in "Britain, more than most countries in the world [being] a country marked by racialist practice and racist theory."⁴⁹ Racism was able to do what no other force in the country could—unite all white classes in the society. This, therefore, served to expose the fallacy and simplistic explanation of certain left-wing interpretations that the race question is merely an extension of the class "problem" and not germane to an understanding of the position of black people in white capitalist society. Call it lack of sophistication, cynicism, or realism, the majority of black people in Britain do not believe that the racist treatment meted out to them has much to do with simply their economic role or class position in this society. In a strange way, such explanations are at best naive and at worst racist in that they have assumed the right to designate class positions or fail to acknowledge that among black immigrants there are also members who in their own countries are considered to be from the middle and upper classes. These people have achievements and aspirations similar to indigenous classes in the United Kingdom yet suffer racial abuses irrespective of their class status.

The following aptly captures British hegemonic reactions in the presence of a perceived "undesirable" out-group. By the mid-1970s, according to Rex and Tomlinson:

whatever the humane traditions of conservatism, the concern for human rights of liberalism, or the internationalism of the unions and labour, there was effective agreement amongst the majority of each of those parties that coloured immigration must be limited and that any special effort to help coloured immigrants to overcome discrimination was electorally unprofitable. At best, immigrants were to be tolerated, but, on the whole, the consensus was that this was a dangerous element outside normal politics and outside the normal class system. The immigrants were frequently treated as scapegoats for the economic ills which beset the community, and, if they occasionally engaged in outbursts of violence or

joined in the often ill-considered attempts of the extreme left to defend them against the National Front, they were blamed as much as anyone for the breakdown of law and order.⁵⁰

Traditionally, the severity of inevitable social changes that take place with each new wave of immigrants is often cushioned by the fact that within a relatively short period of time, the newcomers are assimilated (though often only partially) into the wider society. This is usually achieved by "admonishment," sometimes brutal wrestling, from the wider society, pragmatism by the newcomers, or by a slow, conscious abandonment as cross-socialization takes place. Gutman notes that in the 1890s, Jews in the United States were told, "Hold fast, this is most necessary in America. Forget your past, your customs, and your ideals . . . do not take a moment's rest. Run, do, work, and keep your own good in mind."⁵¹ He further indicates that "distorted perceptions and fears of new American workers" led to the newcomers being urged to "assimilate" quickly or face a "quiet but sure extermination." Those who retained their alien ways "will share the fate of the native Indian."⁵²

As mentioned previously, black immigrants cannot assimilate to the extent that they are not easily identifiable, even if they so desired. Therefore, the most attainable and contemporarily acceptable outcome is mutual coexistence. And yet the general apathy, overt rejection, and tendency of the native British groups to view black people as "barbaric and pathological," together with the use of legislation to ensure that blacks remain "un-British," work against this. There appears, moreover, to be a strange process taking place, whereby black people are denied "real British" identification yet prevented from self-identification. Thus, on February 2, 1989, Conservative MP Terry Dicks wrote in the *Tatler*, "I don't believe in the phrase Afro-Caribbean. They are West Indians and that's where they came from. If they want to go back to Africa then we can give them some ladders and they can climb up the trees if they want to."⁵³

The paranoia created from the 1950s onward led to stringent immigration laws intending to keep out blacks and to retain the Anglo-Saxon stock. These laws have placed the onus on dependents to prove they have legitimate rights to join their loved ones. This has led to abuses of the basest kind and a contravention of immigrants' basic rights. From a position of relatively open-door policy and an invitation to former colonial citizens to enter the country, Britain has moved full circle and is now virtually closed to nonpatritals (i.e., non-Anglo-Saxon stock). Black immigration had exposed Britain to microscopic scrutiny, and she was found sadly lacking. Almost involuntarily, the hypocritical cloak of racial tolerance that she had worn so long, fell off. It was no doubt received with ironic satisfaction by countries such as South Africa and

the United States, which had so often been upbraided by Britain because of their overt racism against the black members of their societies. "King George Niggers" who had escaped the worst of U.S. racism simply because they claimed protection under the British crown, came "home" and found that the protection was no longer there, once they were on British soil. In fact, they eventually found that the legislature was used to curtail their entry into their "homeland."

In commenting on Britain's antiblack legislation, Fryer writes:

It's the first step that counts. The 1962 Act was a piece of discriminatory legislation whose "obvious intention" was to reduce the total annual flow of Black people into Britain. Its "unstated and unrecognized assumption" was that Black people were the source of the problem. From this assumption everything else flowed and would flow—including, as Stuart Hall has pointed out with justified acerbity, all those liberal television programmes on the "problems" of "race relations," every word and image in which are "impregnated with unconscious racism" since they are "precisely predicated on racist premisses."⁵⁴

Having just emerged from six years of war—purported to be against racist Nazi protagonists—Britain, the acclaimed anti-Nazi victor, found it possible to engage in racist, antiblack rhetoric and policy implementation akin to those for which the Nazi foes had allegedly been vanquished. To obtain a clearer understanding of this apparent contradiction, one may turn to Toynbee:

In bringing in a well-deserved verdict of "guilty" against German prisoners at the bar of Divine Justice, the rest of the Western World was proclaiming its own guilt in the same breath; for, when a non-German majority of a Western community had done its best to clear itself of complicity in German crimes by making the most of the German people's peculiar aberrations from the main path of the Western Civilization's moral and political progress in the Modern Age, these non-German Westerners could not deny, in the last resort, that those horrifying aberrant Germans were still bone of their bones and flesh of their flesh.

A Western nation which, for good or evil, had played so central a part in Western history . . . could hardly have committed these flagrant crimes if the same criminality had not been festering foully below the surface of life in the Western World's non-German provinces.⁵⁵

The potential, then, for the vilest abuses and inhumane behavior is contained in the very fabric of Western societies. Toynbee's observation is of more contemporary relevance when one considers the international trend to politicize and institutionalize racism rather than exorcise it. This phenomenon led the European Parliament to publish its *Declaration Against Racism and Xenophobia* in 1987.⁵⁶

CONCLUSION

Afro-Caribbean people entered the United Kingdom amid severe contradictions. The country was in dire need of manual labor, and yet the government and unions contrived to keep them out. Together with capitalist employers, the government and the unions ensured that once entry was gained, Afro-Caribbean people would be relegated to the lowest social class position—for some, a subclass within the society. Through collusion of various state agencies, these workers have been stigmatized and penalized extensively. The government, like its nineteenth-century forebears, continues to be plagued by xenophobia and a belief in the miasmatic role of immigrants, whom it perceives as being very different from the native population.

The dilemma that the injection of black labor migrants created is evidenced in the government's intransigence in response to racial discrimination and abuses. On the one hand, there is a strong desire to remove the problem, hence the recurring nonsensical talks of repatriation. On the other hand, needing to exhibit some semblance of a civilized society, minor concessions are made, such as the 1976 Race Relations Act, which, although outlawing racial discrimination, is weakened by the absence of meaningful state monitoring systems, a shortage of resources, and a resolve on the part of the government not to introduce effective positive action measures such as employment quotas to redress some of the wrongs of the past. It may be that a change can come about only when Britain looks inward in an attempt to acknowledge that the cause, and hence the cure, for its actions of gross inhumanity, such as racism, lies within the very fabric of British society.

NOTES

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12. Douglas Manley and Clarence Senior, *A Report on Jamaican Migration to Great Britain* (Kingston: The Government Printer, 1955), p. 7.
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14. Mr. Marks. This is a pseudonym for a respondent in a series of interviews taken by the author for an ethnographic study of Jamaicans in the West Midlands, Britain. Data from the interviews are referred to as the West Midlands Interview Data (WMID) (1984).
15. *Ibid.*
16. Mr. Down. Also a WMID pseudonym.
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18. Sam King, cited in Lambeth Council, *Forty Winters On*, p. 8.
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20. See Public Record Office (PRO), Colonial Office Records (COR) 1066, Item 2, Working Party on the Employment in the United Kingdom of Surplus Colonial Labour, Papers, "Possibility of Employing Colonial Labour. . . ." (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1948); PRO, Cabinet Papers: CAB 129/40, CP (50) 113, *Coloured People from British Colonial Territories* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1950), p. 3; and PRO, CAB 128/17, CM (50), *Coloured People from British Colonial Territories* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1950), p. 77.
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II

Settlement and Adaptation