

**COMMENTARY** *By* DR. DHANPAUL NARINE

# It's Racism!

**T**hey went in ships to work on the plantations. They were torn from their families, their culture and their lands as they slaved for the Mother Country.

A century later, the Mother Country was up to its old tricks. It invited the sons and daughters of the Empire to work and rebuild England. Thousands went in ships and gave their labor to put England on its feet. They thought all along that the Mother Country cared and would protect them. But they were struck with a bolt of lightning: Blacks had to prove that they had a right to stay in Britain.

In America, a similar drama is played out with sickening regularity. It was eight days after the anniversary of Dr. King's assassination that two Black men entered a Starbucks store and got arrested. What was their crime? They were reported for trespassing in a place that encouraged people to hang out.

The public criticism that followed has prompted Starbucks to hold racial-bias training for its staff. Starbucks is not the only store that has treated Blacks with disrespect. In February 2018, a worker at Applebee's falsely accused a couple of refusing to pay, while a month later an IHOP in Maine insisted that Black diners had to pay for their orders before they could be served.

David Campbell is an Arawak singer from Guyana who lives in Canada.

In one of his songs he states that, 'Britain is my Mother Country and if I go there she'll welcome me!' This is the belief that thousands of West Indians had when they boarded the 'Empire

Windrush' for Britain in 1948. They accepted the invitation of the British government to go to Britain and help rebuild the war-torn country.

The Evening Standard of June 21, 1948 carried a front-page article on the arrival of the 'Empire Windrush' and spoke of the arrival of over 400 Jamaicans to the Motherland. The headline stated in bold letters 'Welcome home to the 400 sons of the Empire.'

The Standard added that, 'as if to encourage them, the sea was calm and the sun shone brightly on the white cliffs of

tears to build the transport system, the social services and the manufacturing sector of Britain. A number of them served in the British military as well. Life was not a bed of roses.

They faced discrimination from the local population that did not want to see colored people in Britain. In 1963, for instance, it was reported that there was widespread 'racial discrimination in housing and employment against coloreds.' The situation came to a head when the Bristol Bus Company refused to employ Black or Asian crews. The showdown led to a strike

Bristol strike led to the passing of the Race Relations Acts of 1965 and 1968. The Acts outlawed discrimination in housing, employment and in public places. But there was a politician that had other ideas. He was Enoch Powell, a leading member of the Conservative Party in Parliament. In April 1968, Powell warned the nation of the perils of immigration in his 'Rivers of Blood'

icisms that it favored the white Commonwealth.

It is interesting to note that the cabinet secretary Sir Burke Trend stated in 1970 that Britain could be 'swamped' by Black immigration. This was the exact term that Margaret Thatcher used in 1978. She said, 'People are really rather afraid that this country might be swamped by people with a different culture.' Thatcher was



Dr. Dhanpaul Narine

eration was invited to Britain and worked to rebuild the country.

The government also had a quota system.

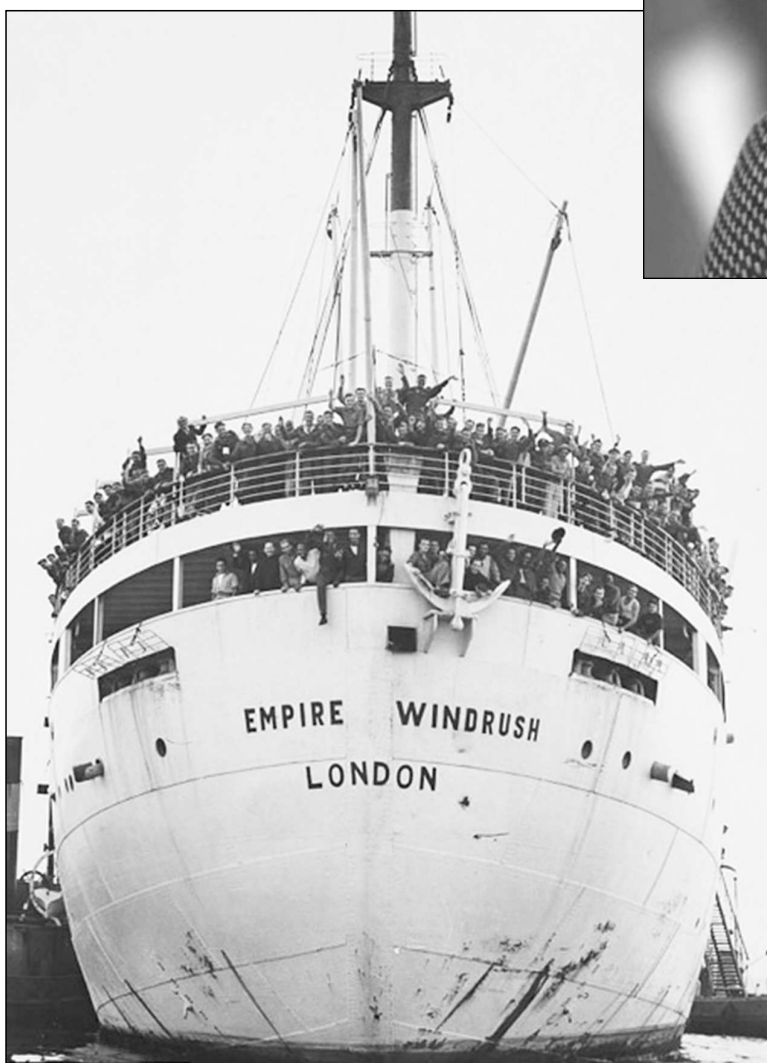
It wanted to deport over 12,000 immigrants annually. This number was known inside the Home Office; Amber Rudd denied seeing it but leaked documents showed that she was in favor of the targets. Her position became untenable and her resignation led to the appointment of Sajid Javid as Home Secretary.

Javid will be judged by what he does to restore benefits and respect

to the Windrush generation. He will have to change attitudes in the Home Office, an institution that is seen as faceless and heartless and whose job is to make life difficult for minorities. Credit should be given to MP's David Lammy and Diane Abbott, and the thousands that rallied in favor of the Windrush generation. But the war against racism in America and Britain, and other places, is still to be won.

A good start would be to give Kanye West a history lesson. He is the most confused rapper on the planet! Blacks did not become slaves by choice. There is no question that Kanye West is detached and disconnected from the struggles of ordinary people, and is unhelpful to the cause of minorities.

The views expressed in this column are solely those of the writer and do not necessarily represent the views of THE WEST INDIAN.



**Arriving in the Mother Country. The 'Empire Windrush' lands in Britain in June 1948 with Jamaican 'sons of the Empire.' The Windrush Generation helped to rebuild Britain after the war.**

the land.'

In the ensuing years, more West Indians followed. They found a country that needed labor in almost every sector. These workers gave their blood, sweat and

and a bus boycott that lasted for four months. In America, there was a similar bus strike in Alabama with Rosa Parks and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., taking the lead.

It was felt that the

they were from a different cultural background, the task of assimilation - as experience so bitterly shows - is all but impossible.' This is a clear case of racism but the Heath government ignored crit-



**British Prime Minister Theresa May whose government asked the Windrush Generation to prove that they are British.**

speech. He predicted violent clashes between Blacks and Whites and said that Blacks will rule over Whites. Powell argued that one could not be Black and British.

These extreme views struck a chord with many in Britain. The Home Secretary, Reginald Maudlin, advised Prime Minister Ted Heath that it was a prudent policy to open the door to persons from the old Commonwealth who were 'of British stock.' He wanted the admission of persons from the new Commonwealth to be reduced 'and since

an admirer of Powell and his influence was deeply imprinted on the immigration policies of the Conservative Party.

In 2012, Theresa May became the Home Secretary. She put forward proposals for a 'hostile environment' on immigration. This hostility has driven immigration policy and has led to the current fiasco involving the Windrush generation. Landlords had to report on the status of their tenants and charities, banks, and the National Health Service were also asked to carry out identification checks. The government adopted a 'deport first and listen to appeals later' policy.

This policy led to hundreds of Blacks losing their jobs and benefits. The unkindest cut of all was the fact that they had to prove their right to live in Britain. It was conveniently forgotten that the Windrush gen-