



## THEN INFORMS NOW – RACE EQUALITY WORKSHOP RESOURCE



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This booklet is a resource to start the conversation of racial equality and relations in Britain. It has some key terms to know and discuss as well as major events that feed into the world we live in today. It aims to serve as a taster of what the workshop *Then Informs Now* covers. We would encourage this to be a starting point to a fantastic journey that can be taken with students.

**Then:**

### WHAT WAS THE BRITISH EMPIRE?

An empire is a group of countries ruled over by a single monarch or ruling power. The British Empire comprised of Britain, the 'mother country', as the ruling power and the colonies, countries ruled to some degree by and from Britain. In the 16th century (1500s) Britain began to establish overseas colonies using its vast military powers and resources. By 1783, Britain had built a large empire with colonies in the newly "discovered" American continent and the West Indies.

The way the British Empire is viewed has changed and developed over time. In the 19th (1800s) and early 20th century (1900s), it was seen that the empire was the deserved result of Britain's technical and moral superiority. That British rule established formal systems of government, law and education

as well as the development of infrastructure, like railways. However, this is an outdated view that has been widely challenged and denounced. Many modern historians argue that it is unacceptable to say that colonized peoples did not have or would not have developed their own entirely valid forms of government, laws, and infrastructures without the influence of the British Empire.

Furthermore, people have become more aware of the true extent of what British Imperial rule involved and the more shameful aspects of Britain's past. Britain was heavily involved in establishing and profiting from the Transatlantic slave trade from the 17th to the 19th century, enslaving an estimated 3.1 million African people. The British Empire also stripped indigenous peoples of their land and vibrant cultures, for example, the Aboriginal peoples in Australia and Native Americans. In India, colonisation resulted in the increase in land taxation and lack of reserve crop, which together with poor weather conditions, caused the deaths of millions due to famine, disease and violence. An atrocity that would happen again in many other countries under British rule such as Kenya and Ireland. By the 1920s it became increasingly difficult for Britain to hold on to the Empire, especially after World War I. It became clear that Britain could no longer afford an empire as well as public opinion changing and no longer being as sympathetic to Imperial Rule as a concept. The Treaty of Versailles signed at the end of WWI promoted the right to rule yourself and it became increasingly difficult for Britain to support this principle for other countries, but deny it to countries in its Empire.

The British Government had promised Ireland Home Rule, the ability to hold their own parliament, in 1912. When this was delayed a rebellion known as the Easter Rising was sparked against British rule in 1916. In the years after, an Irish War of Independence against British forces and police was fought. A struggle for independence was fought in many other countries that had been colonised by Britain that would span the next several decades.

In 1926, the British government agreed the Balfour Declaration – that Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa were completely independent countries, "freely associated as members of the British Commonwealth of Nations". This meant the dismantling of the Empire and establishment of what would become known as the British Commonwealth. During the Second World War, British colonies made a significant

contribution of over 8 million soldiers to the war effort, as well as essential raw materials and goods. At the end of the war, colonial countries believed they had earned a right to independence from the British Empire. Despite this it would not be until 1980 that Zimbabwe gained independence and 1997 until Hong Kong was returned to China. Even to the present, although there is no more Empire, infrastructures and ideologies that were created centuries ago still find a home in our society.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/zf7fr82/revision/1>  
(further resource)

<https://www.britannica.com/place/British-Empire> (source)

Then:

## WHAT WAS WINDRUSH?

The 'Windrush' generation is a collective name for the people who arrived in the UK from Caribbean countries between 1948 and 1973. Many took up jobs in the newly created NHS and other sectors to help rebuild Britain after both its economy and infrastructure had been massively affected by World War 2. The name 'Windrush' comes from the name of the ship, 'HMT Empire Windrush' which brought one of the first large groups of Caribbean people to the UK in 1948. As the Caribbean was a part of the British commonwealth at the time, those who arrived were automatically British subjects and free to permanently live and work in the UK.

However, you may have heard the name "Windrush" in reference to the scandal that began to surface in 2017. It emerged that hundreds of Commonwealth citizens, many of whom were from the 'Windrush' generation, had been wrongly detained, deported and denied legal rights. Coverage of these individuals' stories began to break in several newspapers, and Caribbean leaders took the issue up with then-prime minister, Theresa May. There was widespread shock and outrage at the fact that so

many Black Britons had had their lives devastated by a deeply flawed and discriminatory immigration system. Commonwealth citizens were affected by the government's 'Hostile Environment' legislation - a policy announced in 2012 which aimed to make the UK unliveable for undocumented migrants and ultimately force them to leave.

For many affected by the Windrush scandal there has been little justice as, with the Covid-19 pandemic still on going, a huge back log of paperwork has meant that compensation of any sort is still a long way away.

Because many of the Windrush generation arrived as children on their parents' passports, they lacked the documentation needed to prove their right to remain in the UK. The Home Office also placed the burden of proof on individuals to prove their residency predated back to 1973. The Home Office demanded at least one official document from every year they had lived here, creating an almost impossible burden on people who had done nothing wrong.

Falsely deemed as 'illegal immigrants' or 'undocumented migrants' they began to lose their access to housing, healthcare, bank accounts and driving licenses. Many people were placed in immigration detention centres and threatened with forcible removal, while others were deported to countries they hadn't seen since they were children. For many affected by the Windrush scandal there has been little justice as, with the Covid-19 pandemic still on going, a huge back log of paperwork has meant that compensation of any sort is still a long way away.

<https://www.rmg.co.uk/stories/windrush-histories/story-of-windrush-ship> (source)

<https://www.jcwi.org.uk/windrush-scandal-explained> (source)

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episodes/p08g29ff/sitting-in-limbo>  
(further resource)





Then:

## WHAT WERE THE BRIXTON RIOTS?

The Brixton Riots of April 10-12 1981, also known as "The Brixton Uprisings", were the first large scale racial confrontations between black British youth and white British police. The rioting was sparked by antagonism between black youths and the police. The area of Brixton, situated in the London borough of Lambeth, heavily populated by West Indian and East Indian immigrants, had been in decline since the end of World War 2. In 1981 a third of the housing in Lambeth was of a poor standard and 65% of the unemployed population were black.

A police operation to address the crime rate in Brixton called "Swamp 81" resulted in a significant number of black youths being stopped and searched. During the five days in early April leading up to the riots there were 943 stop and searches in Brixton infuriating the local population and creating tensions between white police officers and youths.



On Friday April 10, 1981, two police officers were attempting to help an injured young black man into their car when the officers' actions were misinterpreted as harassment. The crowd of youths grew larger and more hostile, throwing bottles at the police car. The incident seemingly ended when police reinforcements arrived and patrols of officers carried on through the night. However, the heavy police presence increased tensions in the area and on Saturday, April 11 after the arrest of a young black taxi driver, rioting broke out. The rioters were mostly young black men but they were now joined by young white people. Looting began, police vans were overturned and bricks, bottles, and petrol bombs were thrown, setting fire to both police and private cars. There were also a number of attacks on retail and commercial premises and bars.



The police deployed dogs to quell the rioters as Sunday brought further disturbances. When the Brixton riots finally calmed an estimated total of 7,000 police officers had been involved in disturbances, arresting a total of 282 people, most of whom were black. Following the riots, the British government announced an inquiry into the disturbances led by Lord Leslie George Scarman. The Report issued on November 25, 1981, placed the Brixton riots into the context of racial disadvantage faced by young black people. It also blamed the police for escalating the tensions and called on law enforcement agencies to in the future consult and cooperate with the Brixton community.

<https://www.blackpast.org/global-african-history/brixton-riots-april-10-12-1981/> (source)

Now:

## BLACK LIVES MATTER

On May 25th 2020, George Floyd, a black man, was killed whilst in police custody in Minneapolis, USA. His death led to protests against police brutality quickly spreading across America and internationally, with the #BlackLivesMatter campaign leading the way.

The protests also focus on ending structural racism that exists in all aspects of life for Black people across the world, and encouraging everyone to be actively anti-racist. George Floyd's death was an example of the disproportionate violence that has been perpetrated against people of colour, and it was in response to this, some of the protests turned violent.

There have been riots and looting which are a response by people frustrated at a system that they believe values goods and services over human lives. There are many examples in history of moments of violent retaliation that have paved the way for peaceful resistance.

Many peaceful protests have happened across the world, including in the UK, some of these during lockdowns during the covid-19 pandemic. For many, the urgency of the Black Lives Matter movement and the need for immediate change to protect black lives has meant a willingness to go out and protest, despite the lockdown measures.

Find out more here:

Black Lives Matter | The Peace Museum ([rit.org.uk](http://rit.org.uk))  
Museums, Heritage and Black Lives Matter | The Peace Museum

## ACTIVITIES AROUND THE TOPICS ABOVE:

- Plot a timeline of significant Black British Historical Events.
- Create informational posters about Famous Black British People.
- Read Black British Poetry and encourage discussion around it and then ask the students to write their own poem.
- Encourage students to research a particular place in the Caribbean or Africa that they haven't heard of and create an information sheet about it. They then share that with the class so everyone can learn.
- Research natural resources in Africa and the Caribbean and ask the students to research what these resources are used for.

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## IMPORTANT TERMS:

In the fight for racial equality these are some important terms to have an understanding of:

### ● Unconscious Bias

Implicit or unconscious bias happens by our brains making incredibly quick judgments and assessments of people and situations without us realising. Our biases are influenced by our background, cultural environment and personal experiences. We may not even be aware of these views and opinions, or be aware of their full impact and implications. Unconscious biases are social stereotypes about certain groups of people that individuals form outside their own conscious awareness. Everyone holds unconscious beliefs about various social and identity groups, and these biases stem from one's tendency to organise social worlds by categorising.

### ● Privilege

Having privilege does not mean that an individual is immune to life's hardships, but it does mean having an unearned benefit or advantage one receives in society by nature of their identity. Privilege is closely linked to allyship. It is the right, advantage or immunity granted to or enjoyed by an individual or group beyond the usual rights or advantages of others. In the context of social inequality, it means that some groups of people are treated better than others based on their race, gender, disability, sexuality, socioeconomic status, education, age, and many other identity touchpoints.

### ● Allyship

An ally is someone who makes the commitment and effort to recognise their privilege (based on gender, class, race, sexual identity, etc.) and works in solidarity with oppressed groups in the struggle for justice. Allies understand that it is in their own interest to end all forms of oppression, even those from which they may benefit in concrete ways. Allies commit to reducing their own complicity or collusion in oppression of those groups and invest in strengthening their own knowledge and awareness of oppression. (OpenSource Leadership Strategies, "The Dynamic System of Power, Privilege and Oppressions.")

### ● Intersectionality

A prism to see the interactive effects of various forms of discrimination and disempowerment. It looks at the way that racism, many times, interacts with patriarchy, heterosexism, classism, xenophobia— seeing that the overlapping vulnerabilities created by these systems actually create specific kinds of challenges. (Critical race theorist Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw to them. magazine) Kimberlé created this term.

### ● Ideology

a system of ideas and ideals, especially one which forms the basis of economic or political theory and policy.

### ● Patriotism

Patriotism or national pride is the feeling of love, devotion, and sense of attachment to a homeland or the country and alliance with other citizens who share the same sentiment to create a feeling of oneness among the people.

### ● Nationalism

identification with one's own nation and support for its interests, especially to the exclusion or detriment of the interests of other nations.

### ● Colonisation

the action or process of settling among and establishing control over the indigenous people of an area.

### ● Race Equality

A situation in which people of all races are treated fairly and in the same way.

### ● Racial Equity

Racial equity is a process of eliminating racial disparities and improving outcomes for everyone. It is the intentional and continual practice of changing policies, practices, systems, and structures by prioritizing measurable change in the lives of people of colour.

## IMPORTANT TERMS:

### ● Protest

A protest is a public expression of objection, disapproval or dissent towards an idea or action, typically a political one.

### ● Solidarity

Unity or agreement of feeling or action, especially among individuals with a common interest; mutual support within a group.

### ● Anti-Blackness

Resistant or antagonistic to Black people or their values or objectives.

### ● Islamophobia

Dislike of or prejudice against Islam or Muslims, especially as a political force.

### ● Xenophobia

Dislike of or prejudice against people from other countries.

### ● Institutional Racism

Institutional racism is racial inequity within institutions and systems of power, such as places of employment, government agencies and social services. It can take the form of unfair policies and practices, discriminatory treatment and inequitable opportunities and outcomes. A school system that concentrates people of colour in the most overcrowded and under-resourced schools with the least qualified teachers compared to the educational opportunities of white students is an example of institutional racism.

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## IMAGE CREDITS

### ● Windrush Boat Image

<https://www.windrushday.org.uk/windrush-events-2021/how-will-you-be-celebrating-windrush-day-2021/>

### ● Windrush Nurses

<https://www.theguardian.com/theguardian/2013/jul/05/nhs-national-health-service-beveridge-labour>

### ● Greeting off Windrush

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news-round/43793769>

### ● Brixton Riots 1

<https://socialistworker.co.uk/art/13913/Images+of+uprising+in+Brixton+1981>

### ● Brixton Riots 2

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-30600064>

### ● Protest 1

<https://cbnc.com/steve-mcqueen-on-uprising-his-black-british-history-docuseries/>

The Peace Museum offers a workshop Then Informs Now which covers all of the topics included in this booklet and explores peacemaking and racial equality today.

Visit our website to find out more: [www.peacemuseum.org.uk](http://www.peacemuseum.org.uk)

This booklet has been written by Gift Ajimokun in collaboration with  
The Peace Museum.



01274 780 241

[shannen.lang@peacemuseum.org.uk](mailto:shannen.lang@peacemuseum.org.uk)

[peacemuseum.org.uk](http://peacemuseum.org.uk)

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