

Immigration into the UK after World War II: A Case Study of People of African Descent

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Bachelor Thesis
2013



Tomas Bata University in Zlín
Faculty of Humanities

Univerzita Tomáše Bati ve Zlíně

Fakulta humanitních studií

Ústav anglistiky a amerikanistiky

akademický rok: 2012/2013

ZADÁNÍ BAKALÁŘSKÉ PRÁCE

(PROJEKTU, UMĚLECKÉHO DÍLA, UMĚLECKÉHO VÝKONU)

Jméno a příjmení: **Veronika ŠTĚRBOVÁ**

Osobní číslo: **H09567**

Studijní program: **B7310 Filologie**

Studijní obor: **Anglický jazyk pro manažerskou praxi**

Forma studia: **prezenční**

Téma práce: **Imigrace do Velké Británie po 2. světové válce:
případová studie lidí afrického původu**

Zásady pro vypracování:

Výběr a studium odborné literatury

Vytvoření hypotézy

Analýza studijního materiálu

Ověření hypotézy

Vyhodnocení správnosti hypotézy

Rozsah bakalářské práce:

Rozsah příloh:

Forma zpracování bakalářské práce: **tištěná/elektronická**

Seznam odborné literatury:

Connolly, Paul and Barry Troyna. Researching Racism in Education: Politics, Theory and Practice. Buckingham: Open University Press. 1998.

Fryer, Peter. Staying Power: The History of Black People in Britain. 2nd ed. London: Pluto Press, 2010.

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Phillips, Trevor, and Mike Phillips. Windrush: the Irresistible Rise of Multi-Racial Britain. 3rd ed. London: Harper Collins Publishers, 1999.

Spenser, R. G. Ian. British Immigration Policy Since 1939: The Making of Multi-Racial Britain. London: Routledge, 1997.

Vedoucí bakalářské práce:

M. A. Gregory Jason Bell, M.B.A.

Ústav anglistiky a amerikanistiky

Datum zadání bakalářské práce:

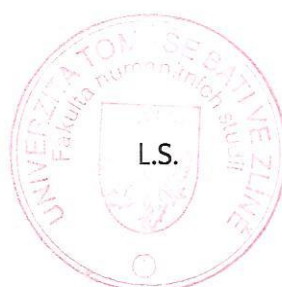
30. listopadu 2012

Termín odevzdání bakalářské práce:

3. května 2013

Ve Zlíně dne 30. ledna 2013


doc. Ing. Anežka Lengalová, Ph.D.
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ABSTRAKT

Hlavním účelem této bakalářské práce je poukázat a analyzovat těžký zápas lidí afrického původu, kteří se rozhodli začít nový život ve Velké Británii po druhé světové válce. Úvodní kapitoly nabízí čtenáři stručnou historii prvního výskytu černých obyvatel ve Velké Británii, počátků imigrace, obchodu s otroky a doby války. Nicméně, hlavní pozornost je věnována poválečné éře a problémům, které příliv černých imigrantů do země vyvolal. Na základě příkladů práce zkoumá způsob, jakým se černoši začleňují do většinové společnosti. Dále také probírá různé zátěže, které jsou nuceni nést vzhledem ke svému původu. Všeobecně se tvrdí, že rasismus a předsudky byly v moderní společnosti potlačeny. Nicméně životní zkušenosti lidí afrického původu ukazují, že rasy a barvy pleti stále negativně ovlivňují jejich život.

Klíčová slova: imigrace, integrace, rasismus, africký černoš, karibský černoš, národnostní menšina

ABSTRACT

The central purpose of this bachelor's thesis is to point out and analyze the difficult struggle of people of African descent who decided to start a new life in the United Kingdom after World War II. The introductory chapters offer the reader a brief history of the first occurrence of black inhabitants in Britain, early immigration, the slave trade and the period of war. However, the main focus is the postwar era and the problems an influx of black immigrants brought to the country. Based on the examples, the thesis examines the way blacks integrated into mainstream society, and it also discusses various burdens they are forced to bear owing to their origin. It is widely alleged that racism and prejudice have been suppressed in modern society. Nevertheless, the life experiences of people of African descent in the United Kingdom show that race and skin color still negatively influence their lives.

Keywords: immigration, integration, racism, black African, black Caribbean, ethnic minority

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Gregory Jason Bell, for the immeasurable support and professional guidance he provided me throughout this work. He spent a lot of time helping me to achieve a clearer structure and argument, for which I am thankful.

I am particularly indebted to Bartosz Wojczik, who shared his enthusiasm and comprehensive knowledge of African and Caribbean studies.

I am grateful to the librarians at the British Library and Tomas Bata University library for their help.

Last but not least, I would like to acknowledge my debt to my family, especially to my grandparents, Ludmila and Josef, for more than two decades of support and loving care.

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INTRODUCTION

“Black people are... really just like everybody else. Some of them are exceptional and most of them are not.” James Baldwin (1924-87)¹

This thesis is devoted to the black minority living in the United Kingdom. The aim is to point out and analyze the difficult struggles of people of African descent who came to Britain with hope for a better life. It is also necessary to provide a few examples of racial discrimination these blacks have had to face ever since they stepped ashore in Britain. Firstly, it examines the veracity of the assumption most Britons make that the first blacks in Britain were the postwar arrivals and that the upper-class society consisted exclusively of whites. In the seventeenth century, the British Empire started to flourish as a colonial power and became a leader in one of the most profitable businesses, the African slave trade. Initially, the British public was made to think slavery was necessary for the economic well being of the country. However, this belief was dropped by the end of eighteenth century. As a result of abolitionists' efforts, parliament outlawed slavery and the slave trade. The question remains whether the slaves really gained their freedom. Before World War I, blacks had to deal with rejection from their potential employers, as the current employees refused to work with them. The next part examines the perception of blacks and how they were treated when the war broke out. After World War II, Britain urged hundreds of West Indians to come and help with restoring war-ruined cities. This led to the rise of a black community in the country and made the British authorities deal with the issues the expanding ethnic minority created. The country strived to fill cheap labor gaps with West Indians. Soon, they had to take action to tackle the influx of these immigrants.

Secondly, it is also important to portray the atmosphere of hardships West Indians experienced in London during the 1950s. This section should also examine the togetherness of blacks and should demonstrate the extent of their integration into British society. An annual event celebrating African heritage, the Notting Hill Carnival, leaves many visitors wondering how blacks could afford houses in Notting Hill-houses which whites themselves could not afford to buy.

¹David W. Bygott, *Black and British* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 4.

The third chapter deals with racial discrimination that has prevailed in the country for more than a century. In order to tackle street crimes, police are now allowed to stop and search anyone at anytime. Nevertheless, it is proved these practices are used disproportionately and are, moreover, ineffective. The research shows that the racial profiling blacks are experiencing are part of everyday life.

The last chapter notes the surprising fact that the top of the educational ladder is occupied by people of African descent. In other words, the group that was filling classrooms of special schools and units is now the most educated in the UK. However, since the students at UK universities and colleges have to pay tuition fees, it is obvious that these institutions, just as any other profit organization, will aim to attract as many potential students as possible, especially those who are charged overseas rates. Once they graduate, most of these who stay in the country have to deal with long-term unemployment or accept a job out of their field.

This thesis argues that in modern British society, African descent is no longer considered the primary determinant of opportunity ; however, race and skin color remain powerful factors influencing the lives of people of African origin.

1 A BRIEF HISTORY OF AFRICAN IMMIGRATION TO BRITAIN

Most British mistakenly assume the first blacks in Britain were the postwar Windrush arrivals. However, evidence documents the presence of blacks in the British Isles even before the Anglos and Saxons arrived in the fifth century A.D. As soldiers of the Roman imperial army, blacks occupied southern England for more than three centuries.² Furthermore, the archaeological discovery of the Ivory Bangle Lady burial proves that there was at least one black representative of the upper class. Britain's relationship with blacks remained stagnant until the Elizabethan era and the beginning of the Atlantic slave trade, from which Britain greatly profited. Even though this trade was outlawed in Britain in 1834 for several reasons such as the industrial revolution or the weakening relationship with the US,³ Britain is still coming to terms with the legacies of the so-called "peculiar institution" that brought many Africans to British shores. Black immigration to Britain before World War II and the position of blacks in antebellum British society stands in stark contrast to the postbellum immigration and position of British blacks. While in most cities before WWII, blacks were integrated British society, in the post-war period they faced heightened segregation.⁴ In either case, however, in a society with great disparity in wealth, blacks inevitably came up short.

1.1 Early Immigration

The first African-born Roman emperor, Septimius Severus, arrived in Britain to solve an uneasy situation with the Roman garrisons at Hadrian's Wall in AD 208. By the time he arrived, black soldiers were already there.⁵ Rather surprising is a discovery of a male skeleton of an African in Strafford upon Avon, as this town is relatively far from the Romano-British towns of York and London. Scientific analysis has revealed that he was between 40 and 50 years of age and carried heavy loads, leading archaeologists to believe

² Peter Fryer, *Staying Power: The History of Black People in Britain* (London: Pluto Press, 2010), 1.

³ British Broadcasting Corporation, "The End of Slavery," <http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/africa/features/storyofafrica/9chapter8.shtml> (accessed April 5, 2013).

⁴ The National Archives, "Introduction: Arrival in Britain," The National Archives, <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/pathways/blackhistory/intro/intro.htm> (accessed February 9, 2013).

⁵ British Broadcasting Corporation, "Septimius Severus and Black Soldiers," <http://www.bbc.co.uk/learningzone/clips/septimius-severus-and-black-soldiers/3641.html> (accessed February 9, 2013).

he was either a slave or a Roman army veteran.⁶ This archaeological find is juxtaposed with that of a skeleton of a woman of African descent who clearly belonged to the highest society in York in the fourth century. Known as the Ivory Bangle Lady, her remains, along with personal items such as jewelry and a bottle of perfume, were entombed in a stone sarcophagus, a sign of considerable wealth. An analysis of the skeleton notes little wear and tear, suggesting she did not live a hard life. Isotopes taken from her teeth revealed her North African origins, a fact supported by her ivory bangle bracelet. According to archaeologist Hella Eckardt, this discovery contradicts the assumption that all black people had a low social status.⁷ Her discovery supports the argument that skin color in Roman Britain, like in other Roman provinces, was not the sole determinant of class.

1.2 The African Slave Trade

African chattel slavery had an immense impact on the global economy for centuries, and Britain was one of the leaders in this trade. Indeed, British pockets were being lined with profits from slavery largely at the Africans' expense. Pro-slavery campaigners actively spread the message through newspapers and pamphlets that slavery sustained the economy and provided jobs for white Britons, mainly in port cities such as Liverpool and Bristol, and should therefore be maintained. The British public agreed, and supported slavery for much of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.⁸ By the end of the eighteenth century, however, the number of abolitionists was increasing, as were their efforts to persuade the parliament to outlaw slavery and the slave trade. These efforts came to fruition in 1807, when Parliament outlawed the slave trade. However, Africans in British colonies remained in bondage. This changed, however, in 1833 when Parliament passed the Emancipation Act, ending slavery throughout the British realm.⁹ Even so, freedmen in the British West Indies were forced to continue working for their former owners. The length of

⁶ Associated Newspapers Ltd, "Found in a Warwickshire Cemetery a Long Way From Home, the African Immigrant from 300AD," <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-1350579/Found-Warwickshire-cemetery-long-way-home-African-immigrant-300AD.html#ixzz2KRhooCti> (accessed February 9, 2013).

⁷ Steve Bird, "Analysis of Roman Grave Reveals that York was a Multicultural Society," Times Newspapers Limited, <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/science/article1844046.ece> (accessed February 9, 2013).

⁸ The British Library Board, "The Campaign for Abolition," The British Library Board, <http://www.bl.uk/learning/histcitizen/campaignforabolition/sources/proslavery/proslaveryarticle/proslaveryarticle.html> (accessed February 9, 2013)

⁹ Discovery Education, "A World of Slavery," Discovery Communications LLC, <http://school.discoveryeducation.com/schooladventures/slavery/britain.html> (accessed February 9, 2013).

their servitude depended on their status, with skilled laborers and domestic workers required to serve their former masters for four more years and agriculture workers six more years. After 1838, however, they could buy their way out of servitude. These so-called apprenticeships gave the planters time to establish a new labor system and gave Britain time to adapt the legal and financial systems.¹⁰ The former slaves worked forty-five hours a week only for food, clothing, lodging, and medical care. No salary was paid. It was presumed by British whites that the grateful freedmen would transform themselves into hard working Christians. After the initial celebrations died down, though, the freedmen soon realized they had little hope for a better life as they had no assets. For some, toiling for their ex-masters remained the only viable option.¹¹

1.3 The War Periods

The most common profession for black males was as seamen, but black seamen had difficulty finding work because many white seamen refused to work with them. This situation significantly changed when the First World War broke out.¹² Black laborers were in demand in munitions and chemical factories while black seamen filled gaps in the British navy. Others were used as cannon fodder in battles against Germans in East Africa. Black troops were praised for their courage and bravery, for which they were promised benefits. However, black civil rights were disregarded even before the First World War ended. Moreover, blacks were victims of racial abuse. A worthy example of this conduct is an incident that occurred at the Belmont Military Hospital in Liverpool. More than 500 white soldiers started a fight against 50 black soldiers after a verbal insult on the part of the Whites. Although the white soldiers were found guilty by the War Office, London newspapers still blamed the black troops for rioting. As for the black seamen, the Ministry of Labor purposely did not inform blacks of their eligibility for unemployment compensation.¹³ The British Government neither kept its promises nor treated black British citizens fairly.

¹⁰ Gad Heuman, "The Legacies of Slavery and Emancipation: Jamaica in the Atlantic World," Yale University, <http://www.yale.edu/glc/belisario/Heuman.pdf> (accessed March 6, 2013).

¹¹ Jan Rogozinski, *A Brief History of the Caribbean: From the Arawak and Carib to the Present* (New York: Plume, 1999), 186.

¹² Fryer, *Staying Power*, 296.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 299.

1.4 Postwar Immigration

Large post-war immigration waves from the British West Indies helped to rebuild Britain and changed British society. By the same token, the environment the British newspapers and the predominantly white society created was far from welcoming. Short of labor war-torn Britain looked for help in the British West Indies. The *Evening Standard* released an ironic article just a day before the HMSS *Empire Windrush*, a ship that arrived on 22 June 1948 at Tilbury with 492 passengers from the West Indies. The front page of the newspaper boldly proclaims: “MEAT: LAST RESERVES” and details the release of supplies of meat from Australia. At the same time, the paper ironically welcomes “the 400 sons of Empire” in a subheadline. This can be perceived as a way of increasing fear in the minds of citizens of the United Kingdom over their uncertain future related to food rations combined with extra mouths to feed. The newspaper is influencing the attitude of the Britons towards blacks, and the *Windrush* arrivals are portrayed as a threat coming from the West Indies (see appendix I).¹⁴ After arrival, these blacks received temporary accommodation from the officialdom. 202 blacks were recruited immediately, filling gaps in a variety of jobs in railways, hospitals, farms and in the post office. The rest did not have to wait long. Indeed, demand was so great that the country started resourcing in the West Indies again. Sweet promises of a better life in Britain enticed skilled blacks to leave their homes in Jamaica, Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago.¹⁵ The annual influx of West Indian immigrants by the end of 1955 was 20,000, which the British government deemed too high and decided to restrict. Since the suggestions on restrictions were racially discriminatory, there was a threat that it would jeopardize the relationship between Britain and the Commonwealth countries in the West Indies. The question remained how to restrict non-white Commonwealth immigrants and sustain the relationship between their countries and Britain.¹⁶

¹⁴John Frost Newspapers, “Windrush: Post-war Immigration,” <http://www.bl.uk/learning/timeline/item107829.html> (accessed March 27, 2013).

¹⁵Fryer, *Staying Power*, 373.

¹⁶Ian R. G. Spencer, *British Immigration Policy Since 1939: The Making of Multi-Racial Britain* Taylor & Francis e-Library, (London: Taylor and Francis e-Library, 2013), 82.

2 THE AFRICAN DIASPORA IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

The large influx of black immigrants was curtailed by the Commonwealth Act of 1962 followed by other acts in 1968, 1971 and 1981. The applicants had to obtain work permits, which were difficult and limited. Britain became selective and granted entry only to those who possessed professional skills. Paradoxically, these professionals were not able to find a job in their field in the UK as their qualifications were considered invalid.¹⁷ This triggered waves of unrest. Racial discrimination gained momentum by the late 1970s under the Conservative Party leadership of Margaret Thatcher.¹⁸

According to the 2001 national census, Britain was home to 563,843 people of Black Caribbean origin and 479,665 Black Africans, while 96,069 referred to themselves as Black Other, for a total of 1,139,577.¹⁹ By 2011, the number of people stating their ethnicity as a Black African had doubled from 0.9 % to 1.8%, whereas the proportion of Black Caribbean ethnicity remained the same. The amount of people belonging to the group Other Black increased as well.²⁰

2.1 The Disintegration of the First Generation in London

The colonial educational system portrayed Britain as a far better place to live than the first generation of immigrants experienced. Most Britons had never seen a black in person. These immigrants of African descent were viewed by whites as uncivilized creatures with strange practices such as cannibalism, infanticide or polygamy.²¹ As Ruth Glass and Harold Pollins concisely described in a 1960 report, “colored people are feared as competitive intruders; they are thought of as promoters of crime and carriers of disease; they are envied when they are resourceful and thrifty. They are looked down upon; they are patronized;

¹⁷ British Broadcasting Corporation.

http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/familyhistory/bloodlines/migration.shtml?entry=commonwealth_immigration_act&theme=migration (accessed April 2, 2013).

¹⁸ Kwesi Owusu, *Black British Culture and Society* (London: Routledge, 2000), 14.

¹⁹ Office for National Statistics, “Census 2001: National report for England and Wales,” Crown copyright, <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/census/census-2001-national-report-for-england-and-wales/national-report-for-england-and-wales-part-1/index.html> (accessed April 2, 2013).

²⁰ Office for National statistics, “Video Summary: Ethnicity in England and Wales,” <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/census/2011-census/key-statistics-for-local-authorities-in-england-and-wales/video-summary-ethnicity.html> (accessed April 2, 2013).

²¹ Fryer, *Staying Power*, 374.

occasionally they are treated just like everyone else.”²² Tensions increased as more immigrants arrived. The 1950s newcomers found themselves in a stifling situation. Finding a sympathetic landlord became problematic. Advertisements clearly stated that colored people were discouraged from applying. Even if they applied in person, they were met with all sorts of excuses, for instance that the husband or the neighbor of the landlord would not be happy about it. A Jewish Polish immigrant, Peter Rachman, was the first landlord willing to rent to the black immigrants, but he exploited them.²³ While white people were legally protected from high rental fees, the new coloured tenants had to pay outrageous prices. Soon he established a property empire based on turn-based strategies. For instance, he would rent rooms to West Indian musicians who held lively parties, which forced the white tenants still paying pre-war rates to vacate their homes.²⁴ These homes could then be rented at higher prices.

Soon, the immigrants found a way out of the vicious circle of Ranchman’s exploitation. The West Indians in Notting Hill got together and established a traditional Susu bank, a type of bank then common in Africa, the West Indies and in the United States as well.²⁵ Each member of the group contributes a small amount of money which is safely kept with low transaction saving fees in a Susu account. These funds also served as emergency loans to members.²⁶ As for the West Indians in Notting Hill, their aim was to buy out the decaying houses in which they lived. This outraged white Britons, especially these who could never afford to buy houses in which they themselves had lived their entire lives.²⁷ Any attempt to integrate in the British society was rather a failure, as whites were building barriers based on their fear and prejudice.

²² Ruth Glass, *London's Newcomers; the West Indian Migrants* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1961). 120, quoted in Peter Fryer, *Staying Power: The History of Black People in Britain* (London: Pluto Press, 2010), 375.

²³ British Broadcasting Corporation, “Windrush: Arrival,” BBC, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b0074ksb> (accessed April 13, 2013).

²⁴ Sunday Times, “Landlord Rachman Gets Rich on Racial Tension.” Times Newspapers Limited 2011, October 2, 2011. 33. <http://www.thesundaytimes.co.uk/sto/comment/regulars/archive/article788167.ece> (accessed April 13,2013).

²⁵ British Broadcasting Corporation, “Windrush: Arrival,” BBC, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b0074ksb> (accessed April 13, 2013).

²⁶ Ernest Aryeetey and Christopher Udry, “The Characteristics of Informal Financial Markets in Africa,” Yale University, <http://www.econ.yale.edu/~cru2/pdf/aerc.pdf> (accessed April 13, 2013).

²⁷ British Broadcasting Corporation, “Windrush: Arrival,” BBC, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b0074ksb> (accessed April 13, 2013).

2.2 The Notting Hill Carnival

In 1958, racial tensions between poor whites and black immigrants peaked in rioting in Notting Hill, where West Indians had organized an annual event celebrating their heritage, the Notting Hill Carnival. Fascists and the British subculture gangs, Teddy Boys, were abusing blacks. Moreover, they started anti-black campaigns called “Keep Britain White” (KBW).²⁸ Senior police officers covered up the nature of the incidents by persuading the home secretary, Rab Butler, that the incidents were more about hooliganism than racial conflict. In fact, the KBW mobs equipped with knives, petrol bombs and leather belts were attacking West Indians living in the area of Notting Hill. On the first day of the riots, five black men were left unconscious on the street. Among the hundred people charged with offences, only one-third were colored. Police Constable Anthony Saunders attempted to help a black man who was being beaten by whites and ended up being attacked as well. He said, "There were milk bottles raining down on us. I felt blood running down my face, the side of my nose and cheek." Since then, the police have never fully gained the trust of blacks again.²⁹ The only justice that came out of it was sentencing nine white youngsters to four years in prison. The judge said that everyone in the country has the right to walk the streets with their arms straight and no fear.³⁰ The first Notting Hill Carnival was held a year after in the streets of Notting Hill in order to portray West Indians in a better light.

²⁸Paul Rich, “Black People in Britain: Response and Reaction, 1945-62,” History Today Ltd. <http://www.historytoday.com/paul-rich/black-people-britain-response-and-reaction-1945-62> (accessed April 18, 2013).

²⁹Alan Travis, “After 44 Years Secret Papers Reveal Truth about Five Nights of Violence in Notting Hill,” Guardian News and Media Limited, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2002/aug/24/artsandhumanities.nottinghillcarnival2002> (accessed April 18, 2013).

³⁰Fryer, *Staying Power*, 379.

3 RACE AND PREJUDICE

Contemporary racism in British society took on a different aspect in contrast to the period between 1958 and 1968. The early postwar migrants were exposed to a legal system and predominantly white society which did not allowed them to assimilate. As the black communities were strengthening their rights were fought for. However, skin color remained a powerful factor for black Britons. One of the restrictions blacks have to deal often is the Stop and Search law regulated by the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act of 1994. This act was originally passed to tackle people going to illegal rave parties. Nowadays it is used to tackle to tackle street crimes, especially gang-related crimes.³¹

3.1 Stop and Search Law

In England and Wales, the police have a right to stop and question anyone at any-time. They might ask two or three questions regarding the person's reason for being in the area and about their intentions. The person, however, is not obliged to answer any such questions. If the police officer decides to search the person, the officer must state their name and rank, the reason why the person is going to be searched and what the police officer is looking for. According to Criminal Justice and Public Order Act of 1994, the suspect can be stopped and searched to find out whether they possess illegal drugs, weapons, stolen property or any subject that might be used to commit a crime.³²

Nevertheless, these practices led to a racial profiling and are being used disproportionately. The latest study done by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) reveals that police officers are up to thirty-seven times more likely to stop and search blacks than whites. Between 2008 and 2011 the percentage of ethnic minority members who got stopped and searched increased from fifty-one percent to sixty-four. Overall the number of black, Asian or minority ethnic people who were searched doubled in the last decade. Paradoxically, the highest disproportional use of this law was outside London. EHRC claims that these searches are ineffective, as only 2.8 percent of 60 stopped suspects resulted in an arrest in 2010-11 and this number is decreasing. The Stop and Search is one of the most divisive laws in the UK, and it has a negative effect on blacks,

³¹ The National Archives, "Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994," Crown copyright <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1994/33/section/60> (accessed April 24, 2013)

Asians and other ethnic minorities. Should this profiling continue, the police forces risk losing the trust of minorities.³³

3.2 Other Uses of Racial Profiling

Google is targeting internet users according to their race and ethnicity not only in the US but also in the UK. A service offered by Google, Gmail, is selecting advertisements according to names in the emails. For instance, an email with a name which is more likely to be of a white person such as Robert Howe and with a subject stating “I Need Cash” would automatically assign to the e-mail with advertisements offering foreign exchange solutions for business. On the other hand, an e-mail with an African name Segun Akinkube and exactly the same subject is assigned completely different advertisements. He is offered payday loans. While whites get products offering them solutions, blacks are encouraged to fall in to debt.³⁴ The behavior of such marketing companies implies that black and ethnic minorities are more likely to be of low socio-economic status and therefore an easy prey for creditors.

3.3 Name Whitening as a Reliable Tool to Obtain a Job

Although the Employment Law of the United Kingdom knows the concept of so-called positive discrimination, the cases of discrimination on the job market are prevalent. Positive discrimination is defined as “the process of giving preferential treatment, especially in employment, to minority groups of society that have been prejudiced against in the past.” In other words, preference must be given to an ethnic minority applicant even when all the applicants are equally trained and skilled for the position.³⁵ Nevertheless, the real situation differs considerably. In 2012, BCC News reported on an ethnic minority graduate who was recommended by her adviser in a job centre to “whiten” her name after

³²The National Archives, “Your Rights and the Law,” Crown copyright, <https://www.gov.uk/police-powers-to-stop-and-search-your-rights> (accessed April 24, 2013)

³³ Vikram Dodd, “Police Up to 28 Times More Likely to Stop and Search Black People,” Guardian News and Media Limited, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2012/jun/12/police-stop-and-search-black-people> (accessed April 24, 2013).

³⁴Willard Foxton, “Google Denies Racial Profiling via Gmail. Here Are Some Disturbing Questions It Still Needs to Answer,” Telegraph Media Group Limited, <http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk/technology/willardfoxton2/100007473/google-denies-racial-profiling-via-gmail-here-are-some-disturbing-questions-it-still-needs-to-answer/> (accessed April 24, 2013).

³⁵ Thomson Reuters Corporation, “Positive Discrimination,” <http://www.findlaw.co.uk/law/employment/discrimination/500553.html> (accessed April 24, 2013).

sending a vast number of ineffective job applications. This helped her to be at least short listed and invited for an interview. Another reason for rejecting ethnic minority women is the biased assumption that every Muslim or black woman is about to start a large family which would limit her efficiency and devotion.³⁶ Again, these examples demonstrate the effort of the British authorities to secure equal opportunities for all its citizens. At the same time, when it comes to real life implementation the applicants are marked by their skin color.

³⁶Holly Wallis and Stephen Robb, "Workplace discrimination prompts 'whitened' job applications", British Broadcasting Corporation, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-20608039> (accessed April 24, 2013).

4 EDUCATION

Undoubtedly, blacks were made to adjust to the British educational system. However, at the same time it was necessary to employ new teaching methods focused on multiculturalism. This became a widely discussed issue as some scholars argued that the teacher adopts the role of a social worker and neglects their primary function.³⁷ On the other hand, activities which help the pupils understand the differences among them lead to improvement of relations between the groups.³⁸

4.1 Blacks in a White-controlled Education System

Many of the Afro-Caribbean families arriving in the UK became disappointed; as they expected their children to receive a better education than they did in their home country where success is not determined by skin color or class. The immigrant children were given the entrance tests with questions which said very little or nothing to them as, for example “How does Big Ben indicate the time?” Based on the test results, in most cases these pupils were classified as educationally subnormal (ESN) and sent to secondary modern schools, where they were trained to do menial jobs. Later, in the 1970s, these children were put in special schools, which made it very difficult to get to the main stream. A Grenadian born scholar, Bernard Coard, claims that the black immigrant students’ failures are mostly caused by low expectations of teachers and a lack of motivation to succeed in a predominantly white society.³⁹ By the end of the 1980s, these black students were four times less likely to find a job than whites.⁴⁰ In such a situation, people have an opportunity to extend their qualification by studying at college or university. However, blacks’ applications appeared to be disproportionately selected. The amount of black applicants was significant but the number of the accepted ones dismal. One explanation that is offered is that the Afro-Caribbean students tend to follow a less conventional path to higher education and thus become less attractive for the universities. They complete the BTEC

³⁷ Maurice Craft, *Teaching in a Multicultural Society: The Task for Teacher Education* (Sussex: The Falmer Press, 1981), 60.

³⁸ Patty Bode, “Multicultural Education,” <http://www.education.com/reference/article/multicultural-education/#B>, (accessed February 8, 2013).

³⁹ Polly Curtis, “Opportunity Locked,” Guardian News and Media Limited, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2005/feb/01/raceineducation.race> (accessed April 24, 2013).

⁴⁰ Mike Phillips, “Growing Up,” The National Archives, http://www.movinghere.org.uk/galleries/histories/caribbean/growing_up/growing_up.htm (accessed April 24, 2013).

course first and then do their A levels. The highest rates of university acceptance are achieved by whites and the lowest, only 36.6 percent, by blacks. On the other hand, black applicants applying for polytechnic courses reach a higher acceptance level than their white counterparts.⁴¹

Moreover, the issue of education can also be perceived from a completely different point of view. It goes without saying that in order to increase the number of students from the minorities in the tertiary education system it is necessary to “raise” the academics of those who would attract more black students. The recent statistics revealed that there are only 50 black professors out of 14,000 at universities in the United Kingdom. Obviously, the British universities are very punctilious with respect to possible discrimination of students of ethnic origin; however, with regard to the staff, there seems to be a real issue. According to Harry Goulbourne, professor at London South Bank University, it is apparent that “while the crude racism of the past had gone, universities are riddled with 'passive racism',” as the candidates for the professorships must spend twice as much effort compared to white aspirants. Based on these findings it might be worth considering whether the black students would not be more motivated to seek higher education if there were more positive role models for them.⁴²

To sum up, although the education of black students has undergone significant development there is still much to improve. Nowadays, special training programs are held for teachers who teach in multicultural classrooms. More importantly, with the improving quality of teaching the improvement of social status of the black students can possibly be expected as these two are closely related.⁴³

4.2 Blacks Now the Most Educated Group in the UK

The achievements of Black Africans are determined by several factors such as place of birth, native language and religion. The most disadvantaged are pupils from Somalia and the Democratic Republic of Congo whose official language is not English. Their language

⁴¹ Harry Goulbourne and Patsy Lewis-Meeks, *Access of Ethnic Minorities to Higher Education in Britain: Report of a Seminar at King's College Cambridge* (Coventry, University of Warwick, 1993).

⁴² Jessica Shepherd, “14,000 British professors – but only 50 are black,” *Guardian News and Media Limited*, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2011/may/27/only-50-black-british-professors> (accessed April 26, 2013).

⁴³ *Ibid.*

barrier negatively affects their GCSE results. In addition, many Somalis and Congolese families are living in poor conditions and struggle to make the ends meet.⁴⁴ Still, black Africans managed to outperform whites in one field. The British census from 1991 revealed that black Africans are the “most highly educated group in British society.” Black Africans who gained some form of college education comprise 26.5 percent, a percentage twice as high as whites. There is a significant difference between black Africans and blacks of Caribbean origin. Although black Caribbeans occupy the bottom rungs of the education ladder it does not change blacks’ overall position. Africans usually come from traditional families, and their primary goal is to study, whereas West Indians with low qualifications come to Britain to work. In spite of the fact that two of the most prestigious universities in the world, Oxford and Cambridge, are very selective, there is a good number of black students who managed to get through the admissions and successfully graduated. One of the most striking facts is that black Africans are twice more likely than whites to be doctors or barristers. The representatives of scientific racism claimed that genetic endowments of blacks made them incapable of handling intellectually challenging tasks and therefore consider them an inferior human race. The outstanding and undoubtedly surprising results of black Africans simply dashed these theories.⁴⁵

4.3 Black Intellectuals in Exile

Positions for black scholars who graduated from British universities are more attractive in the US than in the UK. Although race and race relations is a widely discussed topic in British politics, the foundation supporting these studies is significantly lower than in the US. Due to the 1960s civil rights movement, black studies are more developed. Some scholars feel more valued and also claim that their work is far more respected in the United States. Being a black student in a faculty where the vast majority were whites also left in blacks odd feelings. As a matter of fact, most of these blacks would like to stay, however their skills are not as in demand in the UK as they are overseas. Christian agrees

⁴⁴ Lavinia Mitton and Peter Aspinall, “Black Africans’ in Britain: Integration or Segregation?,” Economic and Social Research Council, <http://www.esrc.ac.uk/news-and-events/press-releases/8338/black-africans-in-britain-integration-or-segregation.aspx> (accessed February 8, 2013).

⁴⁵ Theodore Cross, “Black Africans Now the Most Highly Educated Group in British Society,” *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* 3 (March, 1994): 92.

with Bhavnani who claims that the “US is more racially polarized”.⁴⁶ The glass ceiling in the UK may also explain why there is a significantly lower amount of blacks being accepted to colleges in the United States.⁴⁷ In spite of the fact that blacks managed to get to the top of the educational ladder, they are forced to immigrate to find a job relevant to their qualifications.

⁴⁶TSL Education Ltd, “Black intellectual seems an oxymoron in England', TSL Education Ltd” <http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/192064.article> (accessed April 26, 2013).

⁴⁷ Theodore Cross, “Black Africans Now the Most Highly Educated Group in British Society ,” *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* 3 (March, 1994): 92.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this thesis was to point out and analyze the difficult struggles of people of African descent who came to Britain with hope for a better life. The first chapter contradicts the wrong assumption of most Britons that the first blacks in Britain were the postwar arrivals. The archaeological discoveries of African male skeleton, who is believed to be either Roman army veteran or slave, and the Ivory Bangle Lady supports the claim that in past blacks were integrated and the representatives of the British upper-class did not necessarily need to be white. In seventeenth century, British Empire started to flourish as a colonial power and became a leader of one of the most profitable business, slave trade. Firstly, British public was made to think slavery is necessary for economic well being of the country. However, this belief was dropped by the end of eighteenth century. As a result of abolitionists' efforts parliament outlawed slavery and the slave trade. Paradoxically, Africans still had to work for their slave masters as it was the only way to earn livelihood. Before the World War I, blacks had to deal with rejection from their potential employers as the current workers refused to work with them. When the war broke out blacks were in high demand, especially in fields where whites did not were not willing to serve. The black soldiers neither got what they were entitled to nor were they treated fairly. After World War II, Britain urged hundreds of West Indians to come and help with restoring war ruined cities. This led to a rise of black community in the country and made the British authorities deal with the issues the expanding ethnic minority brought. The country strived to fill cheap labor gaps with West Indians. Soon, they had to take an action to tackle the influx of these immigrants.

The second chapter portrays the atmosphere of hardships West Indians experienced in London during 1950s. Not only were they looked down upon, they had to overcome frequent intimidation and exploitation of a wicked Polish landlord Peter Rachman who saw a great profit in a loophole in the law. This loophole enabled him to charge the desperate West Indian families ungodly money for the rent. Eventually, West Indians found a solution. They got together and established Susu account, a foundation which helped them to bought up the houses they lived in. However, this exasperated whites who were rather jealous that they cannot afford to do the same. Therefore, any attempt to integrate to the predominantly white British society failed. The racial tensions peaked in rioting in 1958, where white subculture gangs attacked blacks. As a result, the white attackers were

arrested. Finally, blacks could experience some justice. Since that they organize an annual event celebrating their heritage, the Notting Hill Carnival.

The third chapter deals with racial discrimination that has prevailed in the country for more than a century. In order to tackle street crimes, police are now allowed to stop and search anyone at anytime. Nevertheless, it is proved these practices are used disproportionately and are, moreover, ineffective. The research shows that the racial profiling blacks are experiencing are part of everyday life. For instance, job hunting is far easier for people with “white” name than for ethnic minority person with traditional name.

The last chapter notes the surprising fact that the top of the educational ladder is occupied by people of African descent. In other words, the group that was filling classrooms of special schools and units is now the most educated in the UK. However, since the students at UK universities and colleges have to pay tuition fees, it is obvious that these institutions, just as any other profit organization, will aim to attract as many positional students as possible, especially those who are charged overseas rates. Once they graduate, most of these who stay in the country have to deal with long-term unemployment or accept a job out of their field.

In modern British society African descent is no longer considered as the primary determinant of life chances of people of African origin; however, the race and skin color remain powerful factors negatively influencing lives of these people.

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APPENDICES

P I Windrush Post-War Immigration

