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# Deceptive diplomacy and racism in post-war Black British immigration: hallmarks of the legacies of slave trade and colonisation

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## ABSTRACT

The article emerges from broader Black British migration historiography by answering the question: “Why was Black British immigration in the immediate years following the end of World War Two dominated by immigrants from the West Indies with Africans at the periphery? In answering the question, the article draws its arguments from racial prejudices and stereotypes that evolved during the slaving era in the Caribbean Islands and the nineteenth century colonisation of Africa. Consulting primary and historiography, it will establish how these prejudices and stereotypes allowed the creation of a comparative framework complemented by deceptive diplomacy by the British that inadvertently created an environment in which West Indian and not African immigrants dominated in Britain’s post-war labour recruitment. The article will make key connections between the themes of anti-Black immigrant rhetoric, deceptive diplomacy and the profiling of Blacks in understanding racial prejudices that would inform post-war Black British migration.

**KEYWORDS** Migration; immigrants; Africans; West Indians; diaspora

## Introduction and context

In the immediate years following the end of World War Two, Britain’s population demography started to undergo significant transformation with the arrival of Black migrants from the West Indies who were the overwhelmingly majority over those from the African continent. Post-war economic expansion that needed a guaranteed supply of mainly unskilled or semi-skilled workforce had provided the opportunity for Blacks from either the British colonies in Africa or the West Indies to forge a visible and settled presence in Britain. The settlement of a post-war Black diasporic community in which Caribbean immigrants eclipsed those from Africa was one of the inescapable consequences of the

longevity of Africa's interactions with the British economic, political, and social systems linked to Transatlantic Slave Trade, and the 19<sup>th</sup> century colonisation of the continent. Although there are scarce data sets to comparatively analyse the immigrant trends between Africans and West Indians, Roger Ballard captures the trajectory growth of Britain's Black immigrant population between 1951 and 1991 that was overwhelmingly dominated by immigrants from the Caribbean Islands.<sup>1</sup> He points out how the Afro-Caribbean population jumped from 15 000 in 1951 to 678 365 in 1991, while in comparison, African immigrants' population rose at a significantly slower pace from 5 600 to 212 362 during the same period.<sup>2</sup>

This dominance of Afro-Caribbean immigrants within the rapidly emerging Black population in Britain facilitated the evolution of an immigration discourse that placed the African immigrant community at the periphery of post-war Black British History by establishing itself as a relatively understudied group compared to other immigrant groups as alluded to by Marcus Collins and Patricia Daley.<sup>3</sup> While there has been prolific contribution within the academia in exploring the circumstances surrounding post-war immigration and settlement of West Indian immigrants, this recognition did not equally extend to Africans. As a result, research on post-war Black British migration has tended to circumvent why immigrants from the African continent despite their visibility in Britain's economic sectors had been significantly outnumbered by those from the Caribbean. This skewed Black British History immigration narrative complements a discourse that fails to debunk a one-dimensional Eurocentric view which advocates that Africans and Afro-Caribbean share little in common except ancestry and physical characteristics.

In recognition of the disproportionate increase of West Indians over Africans within the Black immigrant community in Britain, the article's objective is to explore a post-war British immigration system that was informed by complex racial profiling of Black colonial subjects. It will establish how this profiling allowed the development of migration processes based on deceptive diplomacy which inadvertently catapulted the West Indies over Africa as a preferred source to alleviate Britain's post-war labour shortages in a British society where politicians and the public were not receptive to influx of Black immigrants.

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<sup>1</sup>Roger Ballard, *Britain's Visible Minorities: A Demographic Overview* available at <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/33413530.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup>Statistics accessed on Roger Ballard, *Britain's Visible Minorities: a Demographic Overview* available at <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/33413530.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup>See: Marcus, "Pride and Prejudice West Indian Men in Mid-Twentieth-Century." Daley Patricia, "Black Africans in Great Britain."

## Methodology

A consultation of an array of diverse primary sources comprising of archived records of British government's cabinet meetings, Colonial Office Documents, and official documents of Labour and Conservatives political parties unearth a nuanced picture of racial immigration controls driven by prejudices and stereotypes which inadvertently created an environment in which Blacks from the African continent were significantly outnumbered by those from the West Indies in post-war Black immigration. As a result, the article's discussion will therefore be making connections between post-war British immigration politics, and the prejudices and stereotypes on Black colonial subjects that facilitated the emergence of both subtle and explicit disenfranchisement of the African continent.

Although it cannot be refuted that the commencement of sixteenth century Transatlantic Slave Trade and slavery were tragedies on African communities, it is equally important to understand how nineteenth century imperial conquest of Africa facilitated the construction and consolidation of myths characterising Africans as primitive, trapped in ignorance and darkness. It was the evolution of these racially constructed myths that set-in motion the development of Black migration trends that created space prejudices and stereotypes to inform post-war Black British migration trends responding to labour demands in economic sectors such as those identified by Ceri Peach as the British Rail, London transport and the National Health Service (NHS).<sup>4</sup>

To illustrate how post-war Black immigration in alleviating Britain's labour shortages characterised by the dominance of West Indian immigrants with Africans at the periphery was not a consequence of knee-jerk reaction but of historically developed prejudices and stereotypes, the paper will focus on three thematic perspectives. The first perspective to be explored will be on how Black immigration responded to Anti-Black Immigration Rhetoric that facilitated the Rise of Deceptive Diplomacy and subtle Hierarchical Profiling of Blacks. The second theme to be explored will be on the Mother Country Symbolism. This will be discussed within context of World War Two and rise Nationalism in both Africa and the West Indies. The last theme to be analysed will be on Imperial Economic Gratification and how it impacted on migration trends in both Africa and Britain.

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<sup>4</sup>Peach, *The Caribbean in Europe*, Availability at [https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/crer/research/publications/research\\_papers/rp\\_no.15.pdf](https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/crer/research/publications/research_papers/rp_no.15.pdf).

## Anti-black immigrant rhetoric: basis of deceptive diplomacy and profiling blacks

Britain's failure to adequately recruit the preferred European workers through programmes such as "European Volunteer Worker Scheme" created an environment which allowed an anti-Black immigrant rhetoric to emerge upon realisation that labour shortages would have to be alleviated by immigrants from the British colonies which included Blacks from the Caribbean and Africa. As Blacks, these were colonial subjects who were perceived to possess the potential of disrupting British social cohesion. Peter Fryer attributed this low opinion of Black people to perceptions held by two-thirds of the White British population that Blacks were "uncivilised, backward people inherently inferior to Europeans."<sup>5</sup> As a consequence, there was evolution of racially constructed myths of a dysfunctional multiracial British society that did not only trigger subtle hierarchical classification of Black colonial subjects, but also political attempts to deter Black immigrants.

Driven by the mythical consciousness of how the Black immigrants will disrupt Britain's social cohesion compelled eleven Labour Party Members of Parliament (MPs) to send a letter to the British Prime Minister, Clement Attlee expressing their desire to impose stringent controls on Black immigration. The letter written in June 1948 the day the *Empire Windrush* arrived from the West Indies with 492 men expressed how . . . :

The British people enjoy a profound unity without uniformity in their way of life and are blessed by the absence of colour racial problem. An influx of coloured people domiciled here is likely to impair the harmony strength and cohesion of our people and social life and cause discord and unhappiness among all concerned.<sup>6</sup>

The MPs' anti-Black immigration was also complemented by a Labour Ministry spokesperson's letter discouraging the use of Black colonial workers to lessen the acute labour shortage. In expressing his non-enthusiasm towards the Black immigrants, he stated: "My personal view is that these people would be far more trouble than they are worth."<sup>7</sup> The letters by the Labour MPs and the Labour Ministry spokesperson unveiled an ideological racial framework with underlying racist undertones which were undoubtedly condoning myths and perceptions that the Black immigrants were aliens and unassimilable and therefore a threat to social cohesion to the British society.

Although the imagination of a dysfunctional multiracial British society presented a "strong case" for introduction of radical legislation to curtail migration from Anglophone Africa and the West Indies, it also placed

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<sup>5</sup>Fryer, *Staying Power*, 374.

<sup>6</sup>H.O.213/244, J.Murray et al. to Prime Minister, June 22, 1948.

<sup>7</sup>LAB/1517, Letter to Goldberg from Macmillan, Labour Ministry October 2, 1948.

Britain in an unquestionable immigration conundrum of how to control non-white immigrants who were deemed to be a threat to cohesiveness of British society while preserving the Commonwealth unity. Any explicit targeting of Blacks would have contradicted the provisions of the British Nationalist Act of 1948 that accorded the right of all British subjects to enter the United Kingdom with social, political, and economic benefits of full citizenship. Therefore, any attempts to aggressively restrict Black immigrants on racial grounds posed a potential threat to the Commonwealth Project Britain wanted to consolidate and preserve.

Recognising how unjustifiable Black immigration controls was a threat to the Commonwealth project, Churchill's Private Secretary Sir David Hunt remarked in 1954 "The minute we said we've got to keep these black chaps out, the whole Commonwealth lark would have blown up."<sup>8</sup> To preserve the integrity of the Commonwealth project it was therefore essential for Britain to send signals of racial tolerance through deceptive diplomacy that would present itself as a progressive imperialist power promoting universal equality between its citizens and those of the empire. An example of the deceptive diplomacy was evident at a Cabinet Meeting on 3 November 1955 held to discuss the drafting of legislation on how to control immigrants from the colonies. At the meeting within the context of Black colonial subjects of African heritage, West Indies were singled out as being integral to the unity of the Commonwealth project by the Colonial Secretary saying:

Legislation limited to colonial immigrants would certainly be criticised as racial segregation. It would have a particularly unfortunate effect on our relations with West Indies and might well prejudice the future association of the proposed West Indian Federation with the Commonwealth.<sup>9</sup>

While the statement by the Colonial Secretary was targeting Commonwealth immigrants, singling out the West Indian Federation within the Anglophone Black Commonwealth community was a subtle comparative framework of deceptive diplomacy to camouflage the British racist and anti-Black immigrant rhetoric. The deceptive diplomacy was an essential political necessity to mitigate the impact of anti-Black rhetoric on the Commonwealth Project. The illusory diplomacy created the means of identifying potential Black immigrants who were perceived to have been radically transformed by identity markers or values of Britishness that posed less risk to the cohesiveness of the British society.

The deceptive diplomacy with its undertones of masking collective racism towards Black colonial subjects by promoting a consciousness of differences in the attainment of British identity markers within the British Empire was unsurprisingly evident in the 1943 Labour Party's *Post-War Policy for the*

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<sup>8</sup>Quote in: David Olusoga, *Black and British*, 501.

<sup>9</sup>CM (55) 39th Conclusions Colonial Immigrants Minutes 7.11.55.

*African and Pacific colonies.* In the Labour Party's policy, the Britishness of the Caribbean islands was clearly articulated when they were labelled as "Dependencies with a European Culture" whose inhabitants had been Europeanised in culture, language, religion, and industry. In contrast, the British colonies on the African continent were labelled as "Dependencies of People of Primitive Culture" whose populations were still backward and uneducated that needed training in European highly organised and industrial systems.<sup>10</sup> Labour Party's proposal to train Africans was an unsolicited endorsement of the findings in the 1932 report by Sirs John Shuckburgh and Cecil Bottomley's on "Native Education in Tropical Africa."<sup>11</sup> Their report justified the need to continuously educate Africans in skills or knowledge to enable them to participate in the "White men's enterprises" as they had not gone through long period of socialisation with European's economic or social values.<sup>12</sup>

The low opinion placed on Africans by labelling them as "people of primitive culture," while in contrast, West Indians being described as "Dependencies with a European culture" needs to be understood within the context of the length of being socialised and integrated into British cultural consciousness. Within the realms of three centuries, West Indians had curved social identity markers that would have allowed them to feel at least part of the same universe of thought and culture with the British which most African immigrants could not relate to. As colonial immigrants indoctrinated in British values and traditions, West Indians did not need to undergo radical cultural adjustment to be able to interact with Britain's social or economic structures unlike Africans. The cultural acquisition of British identity markers had on West Indians was well encapsulated by Arthur Curling who ran away from Jamaica at the age of sixteen and joined the RAF during World War Two when he said: "I wouldn't say that we had our own identity . . . everything was done the British wanted it so."<sup>13</sup>

The relationship of social integration and the attainment of British identity markers of Black colonial subjects would naturally disenfranchise the African continent when compared to the West Indies. This was because, most of Anglophone Africa at the end of World War Two was in the infancy of British civilisation that had started in earnest during nineteenth century's Europeans' scramble and colonisation of the continent. With less than a century of colonial rule, Africa and its peoples 1943 as articulated in the Labour Party's *Post-War Policy for the African and Pacific colonies* were deemed not to have been socialised long enough to escape perceptions of backwardness and primitiveness in need of Britishness enlightenment. It was

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<sup>10</sup>The Labour Party, *The Colonies* 18–19.

<sup>11</sup>CO 847/1/4 Report by Major H Vischer.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

<sup>13</sup>Quote in Phillips and Phillips, *Windrush*, 1998, p.12.

therefore expected that the judgemental prejudices informed by level of Britishness attained would lead to hesitancy by some British Employers to employ Africans who were identified to have “language handicap.”<sup>14</sup> Collins identified some employers who believed employing African individuals with difficulties in conversing in English or not being competent in the language would comprise productivity or efficiency.<sup>15</sup> Their concerns had been activated by the annoyance of West Africans who spoke in their various dialects described by an Englishman making “more noises in speech than British people.”<sup>16</sup>

The narrative of seeing Africans as primitive and uncivilised who still needed European Enlightenment for a longer period was also encapsulated by Atlee government’s reluctance to dismantle British colonial possessions in Africa despite granting India independence in 1947. The rationale in denying Africans independence was well articulated by the deputy leader of the Labour Party, Herbert Morrison, when he likened granting them independence to “giving a child of ten a latch-key, a bank account and a shotgun.”<sup>17</sup> This was an explicitly racist comment that did not only consolidate the view that Africans were primitive colonial subjects lacking the intellectual capability to rule themselves, but also endorsed the perception that they lacked the intellect or social skills to be a dependable source in economically developing a European state like Britain. Once again, the British imperial arrogance had allowed them to position themselves as trustees of childlike Africans still in need of guidance that was not consistent with post-war African emigration as workers to assist the imperial power. Britain’s post-war desire was still to consolidate its imperial influence that was inextricably tied with economic gratification and the exploitation of African resources.

### **Migration irony: imperial economic exploitation impact**

“Let’s Stay in Africa” was the heading in The Labour Party’s Newspaper *Tribune* on 20 August 1948 that articulated Britain’s economically exploitative imperial ideology. The paper voiced the imperial opinions of the ruling party by saying “Africa offers huge material which can be exploited for the benefit of Britain and the World . . .”<sup>18</sup> The paper was affirming a little shift from the major aims of 19<sup>th</sup> century capitalist led imperialism which in the post-war era were at odds with labour recruitment from the African continent. It was this desire to maintain the status quo of capitalist led imperialism of exploiting African resources that unveiled ironic migration trends in

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<sup>14</sup>Sydney Collins, *Coloured Minorities in Britain*, 95.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid* p.95.

<sup>17</sup>Andrew Marr, *The Making of Modern Britain*, Basingstoke, MacMillan 2009.

<sup>18</sup>*Tribune*, August 20, 1948.



Britain. This was because, while Britain was looking to its Empire to alleviate its labour shortages, there was also exodus of British expatriates to the African continent with the majority of those as pointed out by Eric Richards settling in Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) and South Africa which were experiencing economic renaissance.<sup>19</sup>

In Southern Rhodesia, British expatriates were still seen to be the source of the intellect skills, knowledge, and cultural values to effectively preserve imperial economic endeavours through the extraction of resources especially Chrome, Asbestos, and Steel that would benefit Britain's post-war economic rebuilding. Therefore, the self-governing British colony of Southern Rhodesia experienced a notable arrival of British citizens especially those of the working class and demobilised World War Two soldiers seeking higher living standard than their compatriots who would have remained in Britain.<sup>20</sup> The Colonial Office was not restricting or preventing the Southern Rhodesian government from offering free passage and incentives through programmes such as "Post-war Settlement Scheme" to the British, a significant number being demobilised soldiers.<sup>21</sup> The case of Southern Rhodesia demonstrates why some British colonies in Africa with burgeoning economies had not only emerged as "haven for Whites," but had also inadvertently created artificial barriers for labour recruitment to work in post-war Britain. This was a result of labour supply and stabilisation in the colonies also been realised as a necessity in ensuring the consolidation of British imperial gains essential for its post-war economic recovery. For example, in Southern Africa, to meet Europe's market demands, economies of South Africa and Southern Rhodesia were supported by workers from regional colonial states of Nyasaland (Malawi) and Northern Rhodesia (Zambia), Portuguese East Africa (Mozambique).<sup>22</sup>

The absence of significant shift from the major aims of imperial capitalism in Africa that was coupled with recruitment of labour from the Anglophone Empire in which West Indians were the clear majority over Africans explained the complex relationship between Britain, the "Mother Country" and its colonies. The mythical personification of Britain as the "Mother Country" protecting and serving its colonies as alluded to by Robert Beckford allowed the development of psychological space of loyalty to assist the imperial power in its time of need.<sup>23</sup> As a consequence, the "Mother Country" symbolism had sentimental and symbolic significance within the colonies that it should therefore not be discounted when analysing West Indians' domination in Britain's post-war Black migration.

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<sup>19</sup>Richards, *Britannia's Children*, 258–59.

<sup>20</sup>Chung, *Re-living the Second Chimurenga Memories from the Liberation Struggle in Zimbabwe*, 60.

<sup>21</sup>Mlambo, "A History of Zimbabwean Migration to 1990."

<sup>22</sup>CO 525/166: Nyasaland: Original Correspondence.

<sup>23</sup>Beckford, *Dread and Pentecostal*, 10.

## West Indies and Africa compared: is Britain our mother country?

West Indians' motivation to migrate to Britain had the hallmarks of inherited cultural and social systems that had evolved during the long period of interaction with Britain, the "Mother Country." The three centuries of socialisation, as argued by Phillips and Phillips, had facilitated the collection of a group of people who had been assembled to serve the needs of Britain as a patriotic duty to the "Mother Country."<sup>24</sup> As a result, positioning of Britain as the "Mother Country" emerged to be that historic symbolism that evolved into what John Young and George James describe as the "sanitized version of British society" that was recognised by both West Indians and the British.

Reference of the "Mother Country" hypothesis in perceiving West Indians as a sanitised version of the British society expected to serve the needs of the British was explicitly affirmed by Winston Churchill when he made a patronising appeal to them on why they should assist Britain in alleviating its labour shortages. He said "The Mother Country needs you. Come and help rebuild her. Think British. Be British. You are British."<sup>25</sup> Reference to the "Mother Country" symbolic narrative when Churchill pitched his appeal should be best described as a sinister tact of racial superiority triggering and consolidating a conscience among the West Indians of their expected patriotic duties to Britain. However, Churchill's expectations for West Indians to support the "Mother Country" had historical context since in both the First and the Second World Wars thousands of West Indians had passionately volunteered for both combat and non-combat roles.<sup>26</sup>

In World War One, Afro-Caribbean affection to assist the "Mother Country" was captured in a telegram from Barbados which read "don't worry England, Barbados is behind you."<sup>27</sup> Just as it was in World War One, West Indians' participation in World War Two was also a significant gesture of loyalty to the British considering the Colonial Office and Foreign Office in 1939 had advised Consular Offices and Colonial Governor's that it was not desirable for non-British subjects to be considered for British Armed Services during the war.<sup>28</sup> Edward Scobie who served as Flight Lieutenant in the War and went on to become editor of the *Caribbean Wings Newspaper* wrote how the determination to assist in World War Two became apparent when young West Indian men became "restless" as they wanted a share of the fighting as volunteers without being conscripted when news filtered to them that Britain was at war with Germany and needed their assistance.<sup>29</sup> With a motivation to assist the "Mother Country," It was therefore inevitable that

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<sup>24</sup>Phillips and Phillips, *Windrush The Irresistible Rise of Multi-Racial Britain*, 11.

<sup>25</sup>Quote in Vince, Hines, *How Black People Overcame Fifty Years of Repression in Britain 1945–1995*, 14.

<sup>26</sup>Scobie, *Caribbean Wings Newspaper*, 2.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid.

<sup>28</sup>Wilson "In Their On Words: West Indian Technicians in Liverpool During World War II."

<sup>29</sup>Scobie, *Caribbean Wings Newspaper*, 1962.

the contribution of West Indians in World War Two was not going to be only restricted to combat roles but also extended to the recruitment of volunteers to support the war in non-combat roles who were to be based in Britain until the war ended. These included 345 West Indian technicians and trainees; West Indian women serving in the Women's Auxiliary Air Force and the Auxiliary Territorial Service, and nearly 5,500 West Indian RAF servicemen.<sup>30</sup>

The recruitment of Britain based non-combat volunteers emerged to be a significant development as it placed West Indians in a position of advantage over Africans in post-war labour recruitment. West Indians' advantage was well illustrated in 1948 by Colonial Secretary, Arthur Creech Jones, when he did not hide his preference of West Indians who had worked in Britain during the war. In his proposal to address the post-war labour recruitment shortages he articulated his desire to recruit from the West Indies by stating "... in these circumstances there has been a natural and immediate demand for the employment of British West Indians, who are British subjects and many of whom have had experience of work in Britain during the war, to relieve labour shortages in Britain"<sup>31</sup>

It was therefore not surprising that a sizeable number of those who came to alleviate the labour shortages were returning servicemen and women from the Second World War recruited from the Caribbean Britain's colonies in the Caribbean.<sup>32</sup> These were identified by Carlton Wilson as individuals who had been reluctantly repatriated after demobilised.<sup>33</sup> They would have preferred to stay in Britain than return to the deteriorating Caribbean economy with high unemployment. Expectedly, the recruitment of Afro-Caribbean naturally created business opportunities in travel agencies as alluded to by the *Daily Sketch* on Six January 1954. The paper quotes a travel agent, Lloyd C Wilson of getting a profit of £2 a head for every immigrant sent to Britain.<sup>34</sup>

In contrast, the level of West Indians' patriotic obligation to voluntarily assist the "Mother Country" in the World Wars could not be equated with Africans' response even though there were Africans who participated in both Wars. For example, in the Second World War, most of the 90% African soldiers who fought for Britain were not, as illustrated by Killingray and Plaut, motivated by patriotic loyalty.<sup>35</sup> Instead, upon realisation of Africans' hesitancy to fight in the war, the British had to adopt carrot and stick strategy by using financial gains propaganda as an incentive while also resorting to

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<sup>30</sup>See Wilson, *In their On Words: West Indian Technicians*.

<sup>31</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup>National Archives, *Experiences of immigration to the UK* Accessed June 20, 2022. <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/resources/bound-for-britain/>.

<sup>33</sup>Wilson, "In their On Words" 1990.

<sup>34</sup>*Daily Sketch* Newspaper, *I get £2 a Head for Shipping the Coloured Folk, Says Agent*, January 6, 1954.

<sup>35</sup>Killingray and Plaut, David Killingray with Martin Plaut, *Fighting for Britain*, 11.

putting pressure on local chiefs and elders to find men to fight in the war by turning a blind eye on how the recruitment was done, even if it involved snatching men from their villages.<sup>36</sup> However, as it turned out, the use of either coercion or financial incentives did not yield the universal desirable impact the British might have envisaged since at some places like those in East Africa young men had to flee into the bush to avoid being recruited if they were demanded to do so.<sup>37</sup> To those Africans who found themselves fighting in World War Two, their participation would mark another shift in Britain's relations with its African colonies.

Instead of consolidating relations with Britain, Africans' participation in the Second World War ignited nationalist psychological consciousness that inadvertently created artificial barriers that trivialised and fractured relations between the Imperial Power and its African colonies. It was the drive for sovereignty underpinned by a Pan-Africanist ideology that would be inconsistent with Britain's post-war demands for labour to reconstruct its economy. For the nationalists who embraced and adopted Pan-Africanism, assisting in alleviating Britain's post-war labour shortages had all the hallmarks of sinister manipulation of African colonies for imperial economic gratification that was not compatible with drive for self-determination. This was because, the Pan-Africanist ideology and movement advocated for the solidarity and unity of Africans worldwide for economic and social progress of the African continent. It was an ideology as pointed out by Hakim Adi that positioned Africa and not Britain as the symbolic "Mother Country" in which people of African descent who shared a common history and destination should contribute to its political freedom and economic development.<sup>38</sup>

While nationalism as a political ideology towards British rule was gaining traction in Africa, in the West Indies, Phillips and Phillips highlight how the politics were still exclusively concerned with labour conditions and rights, with no widespread militant nationalist movement activities.<sup>39</sup> In their volume *Windrush The Irresistible Rise of Multi-Racial Britain* they argue that the absence of a strong nationalist political movement was expected since the Caribbean islands' existence as nations was being undermined by being perceived as extensions of "the British State."<sup>40</sup> Without strong political consciousness of aggressively pursuing nation building initiatives, Phillips and Phillips explain how most Caribbean politicians' focus was instead on establishing a West Indian Federation between the various islands whilst maintaining close links with Britain.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>36</sup>Ibid.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid.

<sup>38</sup>Adi, *Pan-Africanism History*, 1.

<sup>39</sup>Phillips and Phillips, *Windrush*, 1998, 11.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., 11.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid.

In the absence of a strong nationalist movement complimented by a political will of maintaining close ties with Britain, it was inevitable that when the Caribbean Islands faced depressed economy at the end of World War Two, Britain's labour requirements were a natural attraction for West Indians' wanting to escape economic poverty.<sup>42</sup> The inevitability of Britain emerging to be a natural attraction for a significant number of West Indians seeking to access economic opportunities was recognised in a Cabinet Election Business Committee meeting on Colonial Immigrants held on 30 April 1955. In the meeting it was highlighted how Britain had positioned itself as the preferred destination for West Indian men and women wanting to escape post-war poverty, declining wages, and lack of employment prospects.<sup>43</sup> It was this relationship between the state of the Caribbean Islands' economy and the desire to escape poverty that inevitably enticed West Indians' emigration to Britain, while in Africa, there was an internally focused political drive for independence.

## Conclusion

The article has traced why the overwhelmingly dominance of Caribbean immigrants over those from Africa in Britain in the immediate years following the end of World War Two was not based on irrational or random immigration processes but on historically constructed racist relations based on stereotypes and prejudices that emerged during slavery in the Caribbean and colonial rule of Africa. By examining a multi-layered nature of historic prejudices and stereotypes that had been underpinned and informed within the realms of socialisation in British values, this paper was able to contextualise hierarchical profiling of Blacks. An anti-black immigrant rhetoric that became the basis of hierarchically profiling Blacks of the Empire not only evolved out of the need to preserve the Commonwealth, but also of the fear of an imagined multiracial British society after the realisation that post-war labour shortage would have to be alleviated by immigrants from the Empire following the failure of initial preference to recruit from mainland Europe through schemes such as "European Volunteer Worker Scheme."

Unlike Africans, West Indians' three centuries of socialisation had facilitated Anglicisation that inadvertently disenfranchised the African continent by labelling its inhabitants as "people of primitive culture," while in comparative contrast West Indians being identified as "Dependencies with a European culture." West Indians' notable domination over Africans in alleviating post-war Britain's labour shortages was therefore not a consequence of knee-jerk reaction but instead a demonstration of the

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<sup>42</sup>See Hammond-Perry, *London is the Place for Me*, 65.

<sup>43</sup>Cabinet Election Business Committee meeting on Colonial Immigrants held on April 30, 1955.

extent the role of “Mother country” narrative played in constructing an affection and loyalty to Britain. Positioning of Britain as the “Mother country” had emerged to be that historic symbolism people in the British controlled Caribbean Islands were expected to believe and act upon. Britain’s failure to let go of its imperial conquests in Africa based on racist and paternalistic attitude engrained in the Victorian image of the continent as backward and uncivilised triggered the emergence of militant nationalism that marked an ideological political transformation which naturally undermined the continent as a plausible and reliable source of labour recruitment. While there was growth of a Pan-Africanist driven nationalism in post-War Africa, the Caribbean politicians’ aim of a West Indian Federation with close links with Britain the “Mother country” allowed the region to be well posed to respond to Britain’s labour requirements compared to Africa.

### Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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