

A new Windrush Act is called for on Emancipation Day

Windrush campaigners are gathering in London on the anniversary of the 1833 Emancipation Act, which outlawed slavery in the British Empire, demanding new legislation to provide justice for some of the descendants of those slaves.

Thousands of people, many of Caribbean descent, are expected to converge on Brixton on 1 August for a day of people's assemblies, music, art and protest, nearly two centuries after their ancestors were freed by an Act of Parliament.

A coalition of Windrush campaigners say another Act of Parliament is now needed to restore British citizenship to people from the British Caribbean and their descendants who were settled in the UK and had their citizenship revoked after the former colonies got independence without being informed or consulted on changing their citizenship by the UK government.

They are also demanding that those effected by the Windrush Scandal receive £10,000 each as reparations for discriminatory legislation which disproportionately targeted them as a result of the Government's hostile environment policy, on top of compensation for any financial loss. Although in April 2019, the Government estimated it might pay out compensation worth between £120 million and £310 million to 15,000 people, to the end of March 2021, the Department had paid £14.3 million to 633 people.

Windrush groups are coming from Preston, Liverpool, Manchester and around the country, to make their voices heard.

Anthony Brown, a lawyer from the [Windrush Legal Defenders CIC](#), arrived in the UK from Jamaica as a six-year-old child. Like many of the Windrush generation, he didn't register for British Citizenship when the immigration law changed after independence because "no-one told me I had to." In 1983 he was threatened with deportation when he wrote to the Home Office about his legal status and spent years fearing he could be deported if targeted by the police before regaining British citizenship by naturalisation 3 years ago. He is now taking the Home Secretary Priti Patel to court for Judicial Review to demand the return of citizenship by registration for all those who settled in the UK from the Caribbean before independence, and for their descendants. A delegation, including Brown, will deliver a copy of his Judicial Review statement to Buckingham Palace on Emancipation Day, addressed to the Queen as Head of the Commonwealth.

Mr Brown says that being naturalised British does not recognise that citizens of former colonies who moved to the UK before independence are already British in all but legal status.

“It is a question of identity, I did not come to the UK as a foreigner, work my way up the system and then ask to be treated as a British citizen. I was a citizen of the United Kingdom and Colonies. This status was taken away from me”.

“British citizenship by naturalisation can be revoked and therefore is not equal citizenship. It does not put me back in the position I would have been in had I not been wronged by the Home Office when I was threatened with removal in 1983”.

“The Windrush Scheme therefore does not do what was promised; it does not attach the label ‘British Citizen’ as of right to those like myself who, according to the Government, are British in all but name”.

“The Windrush Generation were born with the same rights and entitlements as people born in the UK and should not now be subjected to ‘good character’ and/or ‘close ties’ tests in order to be registered as British.

“At the moment there is a very high level of refusals when people apply to the Windrush Scheme for citizenship. The Home Office is still enforcing the 2014 hostile environment law because the laws have not changed. People are still losing their jobs or are unable to take up work or rent a house if they don't have legal documents, which many from the Windrush Generation don't. So, the law needs to change.”

“A new act of parliament is now needed so that all people who were born as either British Subjects prior to 1948 or as Citizens of the UK and Colonies post 1948 and who had been settled in the UK for a period of 5 years by 1 January 1983, should be treated as having continued to be Citizens of the UK and Colonies throughout this period irrespective of the impact of any independence legislation passed in relation to their countries of origin.”

Groups involved in Emancipation Day are also calling for an All-Party Parliamentary Commission on Truth & Reparatory Justice.

A Groundings Space is being set up in Brixton's Windrush Square by [Pan Afrikan Reparations Rebellion](#), to facilitate grassroots discussion, education and action.

Daniel Davidson of the [Manchester Reparatory Justice Forum](#) said,

“Reparations begin with talking to each other in a way that brings about collective action.”

Lorna Downer of [Windrush Defenders Legal C.I.C.](#) said, "We will build community cohesion and collective action. The Windrush Scandal and other traumas in criminal justice, education, health (including mental health), and Work caused by the 'hostile environment policies of the government over decades has given rise to the 'Windrush Defenders' making common cause with the Manchester Reparatory Justice Forum to [Stop the Ma'angamizi](#) (African genocide)",

Glenda Andrew, from [Preston Windrush Generation & Descendants UK](#), invited anyone who has been affected by the Windrush scandal and their supporters to join them in London on Emancipation Day, meeting at Max Roach Park in Brixton at 10am on 1 August. There are still a few places left on the coaches from Preston, Manchester and Liverpool.

More support is being garnered for the Windrush Generation from 78-year-old John Hindson is so outraged at the treatment of the Windrush Generation and descendants by the Home Office that he is walking 9 miles a day around his home in Nottingham, completing 126 miles – the distance to the Home Office – on Emancipation Day.

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Notes

The Emancipation Act 1833 came into effect on the 1 August 1838. After centuries of fighting for their human rights, Africans were no longer to be treated in law as property. The enslavement of Africans was ended in the British Empire.

The Baptist war of 1831-32 in Jamaica led by Sam Sharpe brought about the Emancipation Act 1833. Sharpe said: "I would rather die on yonder gallows than live in slavery". So Emancipation Day is a consequence of hundreds of years fighting and sacrifice by Africans and campaigns by abolitionists.

You can also book you ticket via Eventbrite:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/emancipation-day-windrush-coach-trip-tickets-164032771435>

Windrush walk fundraising link. <https://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/windrush-appeal>