



A long history—migration in Britain

When discussing migration in relation to Britain, the most popular place to begin is generally with the arrival of the Empire Windrush in 1950, which brought over 492 immigrants from the Caribbean. But immigration is not a modern phenomenon and has, in fact, been a feature of life on these islands for millennia, as far back as Roman times.



But to introduce this theme of migration to the Real Histories Directory users, let's take the date 1596 as an example that highlights the long involvement of people from minority ethnic communities in the history of the UK and recognises their role in the creation of the state. Even a cursory glance at that time indicates this quite clearly: 1596 was over one hundred years before Great Britain formally existed, less than ten years after the last major



Anglo-Spanish War, and about a hundred years after the discovery of the so-called 'New World'. 1596 is also the date of the first recorded race relations legislation in England, when parliament passed an act limiting the numbers of Black immigrants. In 1601 Queen Elizabeth I ordered

the Lord Mayor of London to expel the Black population of runaway slaves that had sprung up out of the lucrative slave trade in Africa. (See the National Archives documentation at www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/pathways/blackhistory/early_times/docs/privy_council.htm. They were expelled and put on a ship to Spain! Shakespeare was at the height of his powers and no fewer than eight of his



major works (including *Othello*, *The Merchant of Venice* and *The Comedy of Errors*) tackled issues of 'race' and ethnicity. Gypsy and Roma communities had begun to settle in the British Isles. Huguenot

and other Protestant refugees had sought asylum in England after being expelled from Catholic states. And British traders were beginning to make their fortunes through human enslavement.

Quite clearly, immigration is not a modern phenomenon but it has taken on a modern shape. Public discussion about the impact of migration on Britain today—on its economy, its public services, its culture, its demographics—is perhaps greater in volume than it ever has been. Thousands of column

inches are printed about migration, asylum seekers, refugees, economic migrants and immigrants every year in the national press, and thousands more in the local and regional press. Because of this high profile given to issues of



migration, it is inevitable that, both inside and outside of the classroom, pupils will be exposed to the issues. And because the media coverage is more often than not hostile towards migrants today the validity of many of the claims made in the media need to be examined rigorously by all of us. Teachers need to feel both competent and comfortable discussing the impact of migration on society—the positive contributions as well as the challenges—in order to deal with it appropriately and fairly.

So who is coming to Britain these days?

In fact, historically Britain has been a country of net emigration. In 1971, net emigration was roughly 40,000, with large numbers of British citizens in particular leaving the country every year, a trend that continues today. However, since the 1990s, there has been increasing net immigration to Britain, with roughly 150,000 people per year since 1998.



Asylum Seekers

Until fifteen years ago, there were relatively few asylum applications to Britain. David Ingleby in 'Asylum Policies: part of the solution or part of the problem?' estimated that during the 1970s, the aver-



age number of refugees accepted in Europe was around 30,000 per year. In fact, because British nationality law was still based on a 1948 concep-

tion of Commonwealth residents as British subjects, the largest influx, that of roughly 30,000 East African Asians in 1972, is not strictly speaking a pure case of asylum. The other major populations were roughly 3,000 Chileans from 1973 to 1979 and about 24,000 Vietnamese from the 1970s to the early 1990s.

Then applications for asylum across Europe expanded enormously. From 2,500 to 4,000 a year in the 1980s, the numbers for the UK in the 1990s ranged from 22,000 to 46,000, with even larger numbers seen in Germany and the Netherlands. Between 1999 and 2002 they increased further to 70,000–84,000. However, the past two years have shown a noticeable decrease in asylum applications, to below 50,000 in 2003 and below 34,000 in 2004, mainly because of legislation passed in 2002.

Another key shift is the number of rejected asylum-seekers. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, roughly half of all claims were either accepted or granted exceptional leave to remain (ELR). These numbers have declined precipitously, and the noticeable growth of applicants in the early 1990s led the Conservative government to introduce procedures (such as safe countries) that resulted in over 80% of claims being rejected between 1994 and 1997. In 2002, the height of applications, but before legislation was passed concentrating on removals and prevention, only 10% of applicants were granted asylum, with a further 24% granted exceptional leave to remain. However, this latter number is increased by Iraqi applications and until 2003, rejections usually ran over 70% under the current Labour government.

Migrants from other European countries

Between 1 May 2004 and 31 March 2005 there were 176,000 applications to the new Worker Registration Scheme. It is estimated that one third of these applications were from workers already in the UK. The highest proportion of applicants was Polish (56% of the total), followed by Lithuanian (15%) and Slovak (11%) applicants. 82% of those registered were between the ages of 18 and 34, 44% were women.



We have some knowledge of the most recent immigrants from the 2004 accession states to the EU. Partly in response to pressure from the media and the opposition parties, the government decided to allay fears of a large influx of immigrants from the ten new EU member states: Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia. In order to do this it instituted 'transitional' arrangements, regulating the access of nationals of those states (except Cyprus and Malta), and restricting access to benefits.

Why are people coming to Britain?

Previous patterns of migration have occurred over longer periods compared to now. The ease of international travel, the immediacy of crises in certain parts of the world and the responses of entrepreneurial individuals in the light of ongoing global inequalities, have made the speed at which patterns of migration can change much swifter. For Britain, the long term strength of the economy, and the primacy of the English language are assets, but also make it an attractive place for migrants.



Super-diversity

This speed of change poses a challenge to the policymaker who recognizes that country of heritage is an important factor in defining ethnic and cultural identities. For ease of classification, it has been the pattern in the past to draw up categorizations that included a broad number of countries. The UK Census operates with 16 categories – yet these categories become more stretched as they are forced to include a greater diversity of peoples and experiences. For example, let us consider the 'Black African' category. It includes people from Nigeria and people from Somalia. Evidence shows that Nigerian-born immigrants to the UK are more likely than average to have a degree, and are less likely than average to be in low-paid work. On the other hand Somalia-born immigrants have very low employment rates, with less than 3% holding a higher level qualification and over 50% with no formal educational qualifications. Such great diversity of experience within a category makes it difficult to generalise from and questions the usefulness of the category.

To add further complexity to the patterns associated with country of origin—it is often of great significance when the migration occurred. For example



migration from Poland to the UK is different in 1945, than 1985, and also than 2005. All of these migrants would be included in a Polish cate-

gorisation yet their very different experiences need to be taken into account when developing policy that meets the needs of Polish communities in the UK.

Over time ethnic diversity has a more complex relationship to immigration. Those from Black and minority ethnic communities are becoming more likely to have been born in the UK. In 1971 60% of the Black and minority ethnic population of the UK was born overseas. By 2001 only 20% of the African Caribbean, 30% of the African, and 50% of the Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities were born overseas.

Increasingly migration is not just to major urban conurbations in the UK but now to smaller cities and rural locations (especially in the case of agricultural workers). These areas have not been used to responding to the needs of ethnically diverse communities and are



having to develop these skills and competencies quickly. This has spread debate about immigration and ethnic diversity away from London, Manchester and Birmingham, to Lincolnshire, Sunderland and Plymouth - areas that had previously been perceived as having relatively ethnically homogeneous communities.



Schools and teachers are at the frontline and everywhere in the UK they will have to deal with the realities of modern patterns of migration, the diversity within the categories of migrants and ethnic groupings more broadly in Britain, as well as the speed of change. This month the Real Histories Directory features resources that could help classroom teachers learn more about migration and provide aids to delivering lessons and leading discussion with their pupils on this complex topic.

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Resources

If you are teaching about the history of migration to the United Kingdom, there are a number of resources in the Real Histories Directory. Historical documents can be found at the **National Archives** (www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/) and online exhibitions such as **Celebrating the Black Presence in Westminster 1500-2000**

(www.westminster.gov.uk/libraries/archives/blackpresence/index.cfm) with paintings, documents from parish registers, cartoons, posters and newspaper articles. In a similar vein, **Speak of me as I am** (from Local History Library, 211 Borough High Street, London SE1 1JA. Tel: 0207 403 3507) is a book that explores the history of the black presence in Southwark from 1600 and attempts to stimulate debate about the nature of black settlement in Britain.

If you want to explore the reasons for migration to this country, then **Asian Workers' Struggles in the Diaspora** (from London Development Education Centre, 293-299 Kentish Town Road, London WC1X 9DB, Tel:020 8965 6342, email: londec@hotmail.com) highlights the struggles of Asian workers who have migrated from South Asia to Britain and to various other countries that were once British Colonies. **Black and Ethnic Minority Experience** (BE-ME) (www.be-me.org/) was set up in 1999 to record the experiences of African-Caribbean and Asian people who came to Wolverhampton after World War II. There are over 100 audio or video interviews with contributors, many of which are available on the website and, in collaboration with local schools, colleges and universities, BE-ME has developed online learning resources based on the experiences of the respondents to the project. **Whispers of Time: Oral History of London's Chinese**

(www.cnhlc.org.uk/) is the first DVD documentary on the Chinese community in London exploring memories of migration and settlement among early immigrants. **Coming to Coventry** (www.coming2coventry.org/) is a website that records the experiences of South Asian migrants who came to Coventry from the 1940s to the 1960s.

Many students will have followed the debates in newspapers and on television and if you want to discuss the issues, then you could start with **National Statistics** (www.statistics.gov.uk/) for the most up-to-date and accurate statistics. **We Are Here... Because You Were There** (www.virtualmigrants.com/we_rhere/index.htm) is an educational CD-ROM that introduces the issues and connects specific experiences with a range of contexts providing first-hand information. In *What's new about new immigrants in the twenty-first century Britain?*, (available to download from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation online bookshop (www.jrf.org.uk/bookshop/), the authors compare immigration to the UK 30 years ago with what is happening nowadays, to find out what is really new about immigration in the first decade of the 21st century. **Photo Insight's Experiences** project (www.photoinsight.org/experiences/index.htm) brings together the experiences of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. The site provides a resource for artists, students, academics, individuals and communities interested in race, identity, ethnicity and cultural difference.

You might be looking for support in your teaching. If so, you might find **Asylum Welcome** (www.asylum-welcome.supanet.com/) helpful with its school support group for teachers of refugee children. There are also a number of local community or advice groups listed in the Directory that can give guidance, as well as established national organisations and charities such as **The Refugee Council** (www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/). The National Refugee Integration Forum also has a new website, **The Integration of Refugee Children: Good Practice in Educational Settings**, (www.nrif.org.uk/Education/) giving information, guidance and examples of good practice.

Younger students may be interested in trying the **Refugee and Asylum Seeking Quiz Game** (www.blss.portsmouth.sch.uk/asylum/rasgame/index.shtml) produced by Portsmouth's Ethnic Minority Achievement Service or **Rooted**, (www.globalgang.org.uk/reallife/rooted2/) a global TV series in which kids fly from the UK to explore their family roots in other countries around the world.

They may also want to keep an eye out for developments on the **Britkid** (www.britkid.org/) site. Given recent changes in British immigration, five new characters are being added to the site, with related family background details and new dialogues. They are a Rwandan refugee, a young Czech woman working as a waitress, a young Polish man working in agriculture, a Filipina nurse, and a Moroccan man who works in a burger bar. They engage with each other and with the existing Britkid characters in exploring new issues such as economic migration from Eastern Europe and South East Asia, its social and economic consequences, and the various myths surrounding it.

Different refugee stories are also featured. These new dialogues take place with the manager of a local farm, between immigrants queuing at the public library to use email, in a hospital canteen, and in a question-and-answer session with the local MP. In character and situation, the new arrivals will enlarge the urban outlook of Britkid in ways that enable all site users to embark on conversations about difficult subjects that have even more offshoots and substance than previously.

In Britain, Britkid is still the only website specifically written for younger secondary-age pupils that deals with racism in detail and explicitly. It provides hours of readings for its users, and is backed up with online links to the National Curriculum and lesson ideas for teachers.

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The Real Histories Directory

The **Real Histories Directory** (www.realhistories.org.uk) has been created as a resource tool for teachers, parents, pupils and the wider community to support them in their teaching and learning about cultural diversity in the UK. The website helps you to locate **resources** in your and other LEAs, such as storytellers, dual language books, culturally diverse toys and relevant **events** taking place in the UK. There are also items of **news** that may be of particular interest to schools and teachers.

You can also submit resources that you would like to include in the directory free of charge by visiting the site, clicking on 'Submit an entry' and following the on-screen instructions.

As well as the varied resources available, each month a new **Topic of the Month** is added with suggestions for using the Directory in the classroom and at home.

We are interested in hearing your views on our Topics and the Real Histories website. You can email comments and suggestions to: realhistories@runnymedetrust.org.