

Attack on the Windrush generation

Ellen Lebethe, NPC vice president analyses the recent scandal over the Windrush generation

On 22 June 1948, the Empire Windrush arrived at Tilbury Docks in London, carrying nearly 500 people from the Caribbean.

They had been invited to the UK after WWII to fill the skills and workforce gaps which existed at the time.

Their status was that of British subjects within the Commonwealth with the right to remain and go from the UK as they wished.

They shared the same nationality as the resident population, as well as the many other British subjects of the Empire and former colonies.

They worked hard, paid they taxes, built homes, careers and communities. Their children have been educated in this country and have in turn helped to build and run our public services.

Now under British legislation introduced by Theresa May when she was Home Secretary in 2013, they now find themselves classified as 'illegal' and denied the right to permanent residency.

The Immigration Act 2017 preserved certain immigration rights of Commonwealth citizens who had already settled, but firmly established a distinction among British subjects concerning rights to enter and stay in the UK.

As a result of these laws, people long entitled to reside permanently in the UK, have been denied health treatment, benefits, employment rights and access to other services.

What can be more shocking after settling here for more than 50 years to be threatened with deportation to a country that you did not know and one with which you have severed links?

Around 60 deportations have already happened and there are stories of people having been detained in the notorious Yarlwood detention centre pending deportation.

The Home Office has been conservative with the truth up to now about the denials of rights and details are still unclear as to the exact number of people that have been wrongly removed from the UK, or been refused re-entry after travelling overseas.



Pensioners from the Windrush generation have been badly treated by the state © Alamy

Whilst the former Home Secretary, Amber Rudd was replaced during the scandal by Sajid Javid, there still seems to be a slowness on the part of government to act.

The fact that people in this country legitimately, have to fight for their rightful place in Britain has caused outrage across the country.

Marches, rallies and meetings have taken place and outpourings of condemnation have been loud and clear.

David Lammy MP described their treatment as 'deplorable, immoral and inhumane'.

This unjustifiable state of affairs has been put firmly in the hands of the Prime Minister following her decision to create 'a hostile environment for illegal immigrants.' The Windrush generation, though invitees to this country found themselves caught in this labelling.

That generation was supposed to have applied for British citizenship after 5 years and some had failed to do so and had no paperwork to this effect.

Furthermore, the Home Office had destroyed the landing cards in 2010 and had failed to record the details of each individual.

Stories abound of the untold anxiety,

stress, exclusion, illness and even the death of those caught up in this sorry state of affairs.

Most of the people affected are pensioners and as an older people's group we support their cause for justice, compensation and redress, but the treatment of the Windrush generation goes beyond this particular group.

The unfair, unjust and indecent treatment of immigrants whether Commonwealth citizens or those from other countries, has been going on for years and needs to be seen against a background of stricter immigration laws, Brexit and the strong anti-immigration sentiments expressed by some sectors in society.

Sadly, and significantly, while the Windrush generation scandal was being played out, and when the country was commemorating the 25th anniversary of the racist murder of Stephen Lawrence, the BBC was screening a rerun of Enoch Powell's infamous 'rivers of blood' speech.

If just, fair, decent and proportionate treatment of all is to be achieved, it will only come about through the radical reform of immigration laws and practices and in a country which is truly welcoming, tolerant and which respects and values diversity.

The “Bronze Woman” statue

Bridgit Sam-Bailey, Chair of the Minority Elders’ Committee pays tribute to the campaigner behind the monument

Cecile Nobrega campaigned tirelessly for 15 years to secure England’s first ever public monument to black women.

Situated in Stockwell Memorial Gardens in South West London, the 10 foot statue shows a Black woman holding aloft a baby.

The idea behind the monument came from one of Cecile’s own poem’s, entitled *Bronze Woman*, which she said acted as a “reminder of the entire struggles of women as the bearers of children, of their strength and of their aspirations for future generations of women to achieve a higher status in life.”

Cecile was born in the former colony of British Guyana and became a talented artist, educator, community activist, play-



Nobrega and the statue in Stockwell Memorial Gardens © Daily Telegraph

wright, musician and historian. Not only did she work tirelessly to raise money for the statue, she was also an active member of the London Older People’s

Strategies Group. She was a formidable and inspiring woman who left us something tangible, of which we can all be proud.

Robots to be trialled in care homes

A £2.5million EU-funded trial in partnership with the University of Bedfordshire and Advinia Health Care, one of the UK’s largest care providers, will be launched in September to introduce humanoid companions into care homes.

The robots are said to be able to recognise the needs and emotions of frail residents, and might be able to prevent loneliness and isolation, improve mental health and reduce the pressure on family caregivers.

But Judy Downey, from the Relatives and Residents Association suggested this was “treating people like commodities.”

“The key to looking after someone is having a relationship in which you might notice if someone is upset or if they look unwell.”

“What matters is the smile, the human touch,” she said.

The digital divide hurts those who are not online

Nearly 4 million pensioners are routinely ripped off because they don’t use the internet, according to new research from money saving experts.

Official figures show that 4 in 5 of those who don’t have access to the internet are aged over 65 – equal to 3.8 million of a total of 4.8 million in that age group.

They face a raft of penalties designed to push customers to internet deals for essential services because these are cheaper for big companies to run.

For example, phone companies make millions a year by charging up to £2-50 a time to send out paper statements.

Some telecom firms force homeowners to pay for broadband if they want a phone line – even if they don’t own a com-

puter or tablet, and all 6 major energy firms impose fees of up to £94 for paying bills by cheque.

British Gas has even prevented customers who don’t use the internet from getting its best energy tariff, while savers are deprived of £500 a year in interest because the best deals are online.

Ron Douglas, NPC president said: “Older consumers without access to the internet are being punished, and this has got to stop.”

The latest figures show that 3.8 million people aged 65 and over have never used the internet.

Almost all adults aged 16 to 24 years were recent internet users (99.2%), in contrast with 38.7% of adults aged 75 years and over.

Housing crisis spells danger for older people

Britain’s planning rules are feeding a housing “crisis” for older and disabled people which is forcing the frail to live in dangerous conditions, according to the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

The Commission’s report found a “severe shortage of accessible and adaptable housing” with only 7% of homes in England offering minimal accessibility features.

The watchdog warns that local councils are failing to build enough accessible homes to meet demand and are not taking action against developers who fail to comply with regulations.

The report calls for at least 10% of all future housing to be built with a growing elderly and disabled population in mind and

that local authorities must reduce the bureaucratic hurdles for adapting homes.

It was also widely recognised that the lack of suitable housing was exacerbating the NHS crisis as older and disabled people were forced to stay in hospital for longer due to a lack of safe accommodation at home.

Local authorities told the Commission that developers were “reluctant to build accessible houses, as they see them as less profitable”.

The report also found that on average, people were waiting 22 weeks between application and the installation of home adaptations necessary to enable them to live safely and independently.

Jan Shortt, NPC general secretary said: “The housing crisis is now affecting people from all generations.”