

**Title—London is the Place for Me: Black Britons, Citizenship, and the Politics of Race**  
**Author—Kennetta Hammond Perry**  
**Year—2015**

Categories: Migration, (Post)Colonialism, Britain, Race, Politics

Place: United Kingdom

Time: 1940-Present

Argument Synopsis:

Perry's book is focused on the collective efforts of Black Britons to assert and exercise their status as British citizens, especially in the period immediately following the Second World War. Her book begins with the June 1948 arrival of the Windrush ocean liner containing ~500 passengers mostly from Jamaica and Barbados. She notes how this event is the foundational moment of the Black-British community and has taken on a large symbolic meaning in this historical memory. Perry seeks to understand how the broader Windrush generation drew on their imperial identities, engaged in discourses of race, struggled with problems of discrimination, and resisted efforts to deny their rights to settle and work in Britain. Much has been written about Windrush from the perspective of white Britain, so Perry seeks to fill this gap by recovering the voices and politics of Black Britons themselves.

Perry begins with the longer history of Black subjecthood in the British empire, in particular discussing how even prior to emancipation Black people in British colonies were contesting, challenging, and redefining the meaning of freedom. She then follows the trajectory of Black Britons through their journeys of migration and onto the various struggles over citizenship and the right to belong that ensued from the late 1940s onward. Perry reveals that the experience of Black Britons during postwar migration can be seen as a part of the long history of claim making through which Afro-Caribbean people worked to redefine and reimagine the racial contours of British citizenship. Perry makes use of a gender analysis throughout the book, especially when countering popular narratives of the Windrush migrants that categorized them as predominantly single men. There is a chapter that recounts the murder of Antiguan migrant Kelso Cochrane in 1959 as a means to discuss grassroots responses to anti-Black racism and the ways in which those responses resisted the idea that racism was the preserve of a few fringe elements, instead of blaming British society more generally.

The debates surrounding the passage of the Commonwealth Immigration Bill of 1962 is the focus of the chapter, "Exposing the Racial Politics of Immigration Controls." This bill began the process of removing the right of Black imperial citizens to live in Britain. Perry then investigates how the kinds of organization that sought to work with the state and were central to debates over the bill, such as the Campaign Against Racial Discrimination (CARD), found themselves increasingly at odds with more militant groups who drew on transnational Black power ideology. Her book challenges much of the received wisdom on Black migration to Britain and the nature of British identity. Perry argues that postwar Black migrants saw themselves as British subjects/citizens and expected to be treated as such when they arrived in the imperial metropole. She concludes by connecting this history to more modern events, such as the 2011 riots.

Key Themes and Concepts:

- Consequences of decolonization are closely linked to global discourses and flows of Britishness and imperial migration
- The resistance Black Britons faced in claiming their rights as citizens in the postwar era prefigured the racial politics of contemporary Britain
- Images of Black family life served to challenge the stereotype that the Windrush migrants were predominantly single men