

'How can we help you?' Hugh Greene and the BBC Coloured Conferences

by Darrell. M. Newton, Salisbury University

Abstract

This essay examines a 1965 meeting between The British Broad Casting Corporation (BBC) Director General Hugh Greene, and members of the West Indian community. The assembly was significant, in that Greene and other managers actively sought the opinions of these citizens as the BBC planned new programmes on race relations. This unusual effort came after the Nottingham and Notting Hill riots exposed obvious racial tensions in a country that claimed no colour bar, and the highly controversial Commonwealth Immigrants Act of 1962. The discussions created possibilities within a social and institutional environment foreshadowed by social tensions examined by 1950s programming, yet seldom from the perspective of West Indians scholars or citizens. Further highlighted, through the examination of original documents at the Written Archives Centre, Caversham, Reading, are discursive elements and the varied perspectives of these attendees. How did these muted voices affect previous programming decisions, televised representations of race, and the canonical formation of programming texts?

The BBC's first General Manager Sir John Reith saw the organization as a 'mighty instrument to instruct and fashion public opinion; to banish ignorance and misery; to contribute richly and in many ways to the sum total of human well being.'¹ Under the Director of Television, Gerald Cock, audiences soon had a choice of musical variety programmes, a host of dramatic teleplays, and informational talks; each demonstrating the ability of television to hopefully do what BBC radio had done for nearly fifteen years: entertain and inform a variety of publics on current, global and national events.

Media historians have chronicled the development of the Corporation and its vast ideological construction of a nation^{2,3,4,5,6}. Social influences of the BBC during this period, and its ultimate responsibilities to nationhood have been deconstructed⁷, as have been the many contemporary discussions of race in the media and within Englishness^{8,9}. The organisation's origins, intent, and onus have been discussed^{10,11,12}, as have dystopic forecasts of commercial influences upon British audiences, but with little regard to multiethnic perspectives until the early 1960s. However, studies of West Indian ethnicity and immigration^{13,24,15,16,17} have proven to be essential to understanding how dominant cultures framed their presence in post-war England. Hybrid identities^{18,19,29,21} and postcolonial theory^{22,23,24,25,26,27,28,29,30} are essential in addressing notions of diasporic formations and resistance within the imperial centre. Also of particular importance have been texts dedicated to a chronology of West Indian actors within BBC programming as a whole^{31,32,33} and on British television generally^{34,35}.

The Black presence in the United Kingdom is clearly documented^{36,37,38}, yet this present study is concerned with efforts undertaken by the BBC to address the specific needs of the West Indian community through its public service and educational agenda on radio and television^{39,40}. Also examined is the influence of television upon racial issues, and perceptions, but from the perspectives of the West Indian community, and their subsequent recommendations to the BBC. The historic significance of West Indian immigration after World War II, was underscored by the televisual impact of their arrival.

One such occurrence took place on June 21, 1948, as the troop transport *Empire Windrush* arrived at Tilbury Docks with West Indian immigrants eagerly searching for a better life within the British Isles. This became a landmark event, particularly when shown on *Television Newsreel* (BBC, 1948-54), a programme that originally used British Pathe 'cinema' newsreels. In some cases, newspapers

reported the arrival of the settlers, while letters to the editor's page of various papers warned of civil unrest as these men sought employment.⁴¹ With looming concerns of housing, employments, and racial tensions, the BBC Television Service began creating programmes that addressed the impact of Black Britons, their attempts to establish citizenship within England, and subsequent issues of colour prejudice. Management soon approved talks and scientific studies as a means of examining racial tensions, though originally not in England.⁴² In the years that followed however, social tensions led to transmissions that included a series of news specials on Britain's Colour Bar, and docudramas such as *A Man from the Sun* (BBC, 11/6/56) that attempted to frame the immigrant experience for British television audiences, but from the West Indian point of view.

Despite these efforts, many West Indians making the transition toward citizenship continued to feel isolated from mainstream British society. As the BBC moved further into television broadcasting, the organisation and its managers drew from ideologies of nationalism that continued to place the African-Caribbean settler in a position marginalised from the imagined mainstream of English culture. However, the concerns of 'typical coloured folk,' as the League of Coloured Peoples called them⁴³, eventually came to the attention of management through a series of community meetings. These assemblies brought management together with these new citizens to determine what they were experiencing, and how best to help them and define their lives and experiences in England. As an example, BBC's Director General Hugh Greene called upon leaders of London's West Indian, Pakistani, and Indian communities in 1965 to discuss ways the Television Service could better serve their needs as new citizens. These 'public conferences' created possibilities within a social and institutional environment that had been foreshadowed by social tensions, some of which were examined by programming. Of major importance however, was that these were seldom from the perspective of West Indians themselves.

This paper discusses how the BBC ultimately drew upon various African-Caribbean organisations to serve as advisors, and coordinators in these efforts - helping, in large part, to shape the future of British television. Topics included representations of race, preferred programmes, and multiethnic audiences. This article seeks to address some of the concerns West Indian organisations expressed, and the suggestions made as the BBC continued to shape its programming choices in relation to race and immigration. Though the aforementioned histories carefully discuss the development of the BBC and its massive influence, there are seldom discussions about how ethnicity as a focus of management practices, shaped television programming, and policy-making even before the turbulent 1960s. After hearing the opinions of those invited to the conferences, management, and the Director General, could hypothetically develop better policies, and programmes, that addressed challenges undertaken by these peoples.

An Eye on Immigrants

In the January of 1965, Russian born journalist Taya Zinkin wrote a series of articles published in the *Manchester Guardian* addressing how immigrants, particularly women, could assimilate into English culture. In one that addressed non-English speaking Indians, she noted that:

The most rural of immigrants have transistor radios, most immigrants dwellings have a television set, The BBC finds time once a fortnight for a television programme for the deaf and dumb; it should find time, at least once a week, for a programme in Hindustani (understood by both Indians and Pakistanis).⁴⁴

Postmaster General, Anthony Wedgwood Benn, forwarded this article to Director General, Hugh Greene, and two others addressing Bedford's Italian population, and Zinkin's concerns over a sense of xenophobia among Britons. Greene thanked Benn for his efforts, and noted that discussions about programmes for immigrants had taken place at a recent meeting of the General Advisory Council.

Opinions about the desirability of special programmes as discussed in Zinkin's article were evenly divided:

But some of the people closest to the problem through their daily work were doubtful about the wisdom of doing anything which might tend to emphasize the apartness of coloured immigrants.⁴⁵

Greene wrote to Phillip Mason of the Institute of Race Relations (IRR) about the same possibility, and expressed the concerns he had to Benn, yet Mason was in favour of such broadcasts, particularly for Pakistani and Indian women. However, Greene voiced a need to gather data on location, and available viewing and listening facilities for audiences, and continued discussions about this problem with the Institute of Race Relations. He also expressed a desire to get more advice from them, and keep Mason in touch with the BBC's ideas as they developed. He commented that the BBC had already done a special series of informational programmes to the Caribbean Service addressed to immigrants intending to come to Britain. He felt that this effort fitted with the desirability for training before people go to live in a new environment.⁴⁶

When considering the intent to educate these immigrant audiences on life in Britain, the Head of Northern Regional Programmes (H.N.R.P.), G. D. Miller, reported that the Education Officer, North West had produced a report on Adult Education interests, and found that the 'old-style adult education is old-hat and out of date.' People were not interested in international affairs, or extra-mural education offered via sound, but immigrant groups were supposedly more interested in things at a much lower, less sophisticated level; issues that related more to 'their homes, children,' and such. Therefore, he believed in a serious examination of programmes for immigrants since integration as a social problem was becoming more acute.⁴⁷ Yet, in a memo from television secretariat, Colin Shaw, a suggestion was far from racially sensitive:

Have you ever considered the possibility of mounting a regular programme for West Indians in this country? **It is not possible** that combination of West Indian rhythms and news from home would be a useful service to provide and might interest other listeners. While there is some danger that such a programme might underline the separate status of West Indians in the British community, it is questionable whether more harm than good would be done. (It might be called *Spades are Trumps*.)⁴⁸

As West Indians continued the transition toward citizenship, a number of organisations wrote letters to BBC management critical of programming choices. A major complaint was that race programmes simply did not go far enough to stress the similarities of cultures as opposed to problems in assimilation. The BBC's Director General Hugh Greene who, at a meeting with Regional Controllers in March of 1965, expressed concerns that special programmes for coloured immigrants should not emphasize the 'apartness' of the coloured community reemphasized this concern.⁴⁹ In agreement was famed West Indian cricketer Sir Learie Constantine, who also served as a member of the BBC General Advisory Council, yet other members of the General Advisory Council were less convinced, choosing to believe instead that most immigrants work in England for a number of years but then return to their home countries with income earned. From the meeting notes with Hugh Greene, it is clear that Robert Stead, controller of the North Region also stated that it was doubtful whether immigrants would listen to such programmes 'judging from the evidence already in hand to the lack of initiative many immigrants were showing toward helping themselves acclimate to British life.'⁵⁰

Constantine, through the General Advisory Council, had already requested that the BBC strongly consider more employment of coloured people and in the External Services, in particular.⁵¹ L.G. Thirkell, Controller of Staff Training and Appointments, requested a copy of minutes from a recent board of management meeting in which Constantine's suggestion was considered 'hardly practicable'.⁵² Greene asked that Sir Learie know of the on-going recruitment of non-White programme staff for domestic services. However, Director of Administration, J.H. Arkell, in a memorandum to Greene

expressed no knowledge of any specific plans to train non-White programme staff, other than an attempt by the BBC to hire a coloured announcer.⁵³ It was also during 1965 that *the Colour in Britain* radio series on the BBC's Third Programme was receiving critical acclaim for providing a balanced look at race relations within the country. In addition, the BBC planned special broadcasts for the immigrant communities of the Northwest (such as *English by Radio*, programmed for Indian and Pakistani immigrants). These programmes underscored a belief by Greene that management should re-examine educational programmes about race relations and, more importantly, cultural assimilation.

In a report cautiously entitled, *The Immigrant Problem*, Greene described a meeting with Maurice Foley, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State in the Department of Economic Affairs, who had special responsibility for coordinating the work of the various departments concerned with Commonwealth immigrants. Greene and Foley were concerned with what role BBC Radio and Television could play in the assimilation of all immigrant groups, but primarily West Indians, Indians and Pakistanis. Foley emphasized the urgency of the need for language teaching for Indians and Pakistanis, and advice to immigrants about many aspects of life in Britain. Greene advised him of the correspondence with Mason and the Institute of Race Relations, who agreed that the problem was most acute in London, the Midlands and Yorkshire. Foley felt there was evidence that Indians and Pakistanis relied more on television than on radio partly because they so often had little or no knowledge of the English language. Greene explained the daunting financial problems involved in the production of special television programmes as well as sound broadcasts; therefore, the experimental efforts on radio in the London, the Midland and North Regions would provide some guidelines before the use of television began.

Greene further explained that to formulate the plan, the BBC would host two separate conferences. Leaders of the Indian and Pakistani communities would attend the first, whilst people concerned with the West Indian communities would attend the second conference. Also invited would be social workers, Directors of Education and a representative of the Ministry. Learie Constantine would attend both conferences as an observer. At the first conference, the BBC featured sample recordings of English by Radio lessons prepared for Hindi and Urdu-speaking audiences, whilst at the second conference; audiences would hear examples of Overseas Services programmes giving advice to West Indian immigrants. Greene also discussed making 'suitable films' in the BBC Television Enterprises catalogue available to immigrants curious about life in England. Greene felt this was a natural connection to the special series already offered by the Caribbean Service, and sought advice on what each community felt about the Corporation's efforts.⁵⁴ The efforts of the BBC within the Asian immigrant community directly addressed the challenges of assimilation through an understanding of the English language. However, concerns for the West Indian community clearly incorporated marked cultural differences between their lived communities and the British public.

The Coloured Conferences

In July of 1965, the Press Officer of the Television Service sent a message to several news organisations announcing a series of planned conferences in which BBC management (including Director General Hugh Greene) would meet with selected 'coloured guests' to discuss immigration issues. A press announcement from the BBC Evening Press Officer, Dulcie J. Marshall, was distributed to the Press Association, Exchange Telegraph, Jewish Telegraphic Agency, Reuters (UK Desk), and the United Press International's Television Department. Each responded by sending representatives to cover the meeting and subsequent discussions. The first conference on the 6th would specifically discuss the problems of Indian and Pakistani immigrants.⁵⁵ The second conference on 13 July in the Council Chamber at Broadcasting House would be with representatives of the West Indian community as 'the guests of the BBC.'⁵⁶ The meeting led by Greene, welcomed representatives from more than twenty coloured organisations concerned about the impact of immigrants in London, the Midlands

and the North. Joining Greene was: Chief Assistant, O.J. Whitley; H.G. Campey, Head of Publicity; D. Stephenson, Head of Overseas and Foreign Relations, F.G. Gillard, Director of Sound Broadcasting, and others trusted with the new direction of the corporation.⁵⁷ Those in attendance at the first conference were comprised of various members of the Asian community, including Dr. D.R. Prem, Activist, Liberal Parliamentary candidate and Birmingham's first Asian Labour councillor; Tassaduq Ahmed, prominent community leader, and associate of the Centre for the Study of Minorities; Educator, activist and scholar Mrs. Hansa Mehta and others.⁵⁸

In an effort to serve these peoples, BBC management discussed further development of the programme *Make yourself at Home*; touted as a new BBC service for Indian and Pakistani immigrants. The segments would run on radio and television with a planned for transmission beginning 10 October 1965. In a report filed from producer David Gretton, the programme would be considered a 'simple English by Radio series in basic Urdu/Hindi,' and 'compiled to take account of the everyday situations in which immigrants find themselves in this country.'⁵⁹ The approach involved radio broadcasts early Sunday mornings on medium wave (for the North, Midlands and London) as part of the Home Service, and each programme included lessons in English. Featured were the characters of Mr. and Mrs. Chaudury, their family and friends, and the programme considered the problems immigrants may meet in their daily lives. Listeners would meet the Chaudury family on the first broadcast *Mrs. Chaudury goes shopping*.⁶⁰ Also included as a means of drawing audiences, was popular music from current Indian and Pakistani films. The programme planned for repetition on Wednesdays at 12:25 p.m. invited Indian and Pakistani listeners to forward questions, and problems, to the BBC's Birmingham Broadcasting House.

The West Indian Conference

The focus of the West Indian meeting seemed highly encouraging; Greene stated the Service recognized that the problems of West Indians were unique and the main purpose of the conference was to provide an opportunity for the BBC to learn from those present what the West Indian problems actually were and how the BBC could help. The BBC held a list of Societies and Organisations identifying coloured groups in the mid-1950s as important sources for televised interviews and talks by management. Some included the popular West Indian Students Union, the Stepney League of Coloured People, the Anglo-Caribbean club, and the League of Coloured Peoples.⁶¹ The conference held with leaders of the Indian and Pakistani communities, helped the BBC to recognize that their problems were, in many ways, different from those of West Indians. The main purpose of this conference was to provide an opportunity for the BBC to learn from those present what the West Indian problems were specifically, and how the BBC could help. O.J. Whitley, in preparation for the West Indian conference, sent a note to Greene as evidence of the 'BBC's interest in coloured people' and frequent representation of them, and their views. He suggested that the Director General mention the programmes, *Our God Is Black* (BBC1, 6/7/65), *Frankly Speaking* with Prime Minister of Uganda Milton Obote on the Home Service (9/7/65), and *the Reith Lectures on Race Relations*, delivered by author Robert Gardiner, entitled *A World of Peoples*. Also suggested was mention of the appointment of a Jamaican as a Home Service announcer.⁶²

The Director General noted there were 'two sides' to the BBC's problem. One was to decide how the BBC should make West Indians feel at home in the United Kingdom, and the other was to educate public opinion, both in general, and in the particular communities in which West Indians lived. With regard to the second part of the problem, it was unfortunate that there was no system of local broadcasting, because this could have provided an excellent way of reaching the communities, and discussing their day-to-day problems. As it was, the BBC had to depend on its existing regional and national services in radio and television, not forgetting the External Services' Caribbean service which had made a useful contribution.

For those who were interested, there was a booklet available, *Going to Britain*, which was based on a series of talks given via the Caribbean Service. Its purpose was to prepare immigrants for the life they would meet in England. He stated:

The information that we seek from you this morning falls under two main headings: first, what can we do for immigrants in our broadcasts; and secondly, what can we do about immigrants directly or indirectly to improve the climate of public opinion; and, beyond that, how can the BBC's efforts, which must necessarily be to some extent limited, be integrated with what the central Government is doing, with what local authorities are doing, with what local education is doing and what local welfare organisations are doing. Then there is a lot of detailed information which would be helpful and which, I hope, will emerge during the discussion: what, for instance, are the listening and viewing habits of West Indians in this country, if it is possible to generalise at all? Do they prefer television, or do they prefer radio? Are there any arrangements for group listening or viewing or any organised form of further education especially directed to West Indians? Those are some of the points, which, I hope, will emerge, and perhaps I could ask someone to set the ball rolling.⁶³

Within the proceedings, attendees had the opportunities to express concerns over the Service's plans for future race-related programming. Among the many suggestions made, some related to more documentaries to give the other side of the West Indian situation and that 'programmes giving the historical background of the link between Britain and the West Indies would be useful'.⁶⁴

Chief Welfare Officer R.E.K. Philips noted that educational programming by television and radio should focus upon educating the British public in accepting West Indians as citizens - not just educating West Indians to be citizens. The lives of West Indians, subsequent customs and behavior were also principle issues. Philips then mentioned a BBC programme about life in Jamaica, *A Little Bit of Madness* (BBC, 1965), produced in conjunction with the Jamaican Broadcasting Company. Philips felt that the documentary showed a very small aspect of life in the islands, yet helped to spread the idea that every 'black man in the street' was uncivilized and practiced lower ethical standards. Philips noted that one of the 'principal roles, whether it be sound or television, must be in the interest of helping to build the right climate of relationships in this society'. His further concerns included a matter of education, via radio or television, 'of the British public into acceptance; into recognising that the differences which they might claim on the basis of stereotype, do not really exist'.⁶⁵ Philips explained to Greene and other managers that the BBC had already received concerns over the programme, yet ignored the concerns. He notes:

It was pointed out to the BBC that this was an unfortunate programme. They disputed it, and we had a further slap in the face by a repeat of the programme. I do not think that this is very helpful to the situation. I raise the matter at this stage because I should sincerely hope that we are not just here to discuss things because this is the done thing, but that we are here because there is genuine interest in arriving at some way of dealing with these situations, that any comments we make will be regarded with a measure of weight and that, so far as policy will allow, these words will be taken into consideration. I assume that I will speak further in the discussion, but at this stage, I merely wish to have this assurance.⁶⁶

Greene disagreed with Philips, citing the programme as a 'brilliant documentary, made in association with the Jamaican Broadcasting Corporation', which seems to provide some measure of authenticity, and 'an accurate picture of a certain aspect of life in Jamaica. It had pretended to be no more than this, and any unfortunate side effects could have arisen only through misunderstanding of its aim.'⁶⁷ He also noted that, as a single programme, it did not represent BBC policy in any way. Philips retorted:

I do not question the brilliance of the documentary. I do not suggest that anything false was stated in the film. This is something which I have no objection to being shown to people who can relate it to the rest of the society, but different results are to be expected when you show this as a

mass thing when people already have false notions of families which live in the street because they are coloured — 'Out you go, because you lower the standards' — and yet, if you closed the door of the house, you would never realise that the occupants were West Indian people and children.⁶⁸

J. E. Fraser, formerly of the West Indies Commission, said the primary concern of those present should be to improve relationships between the English people and West Indians. It would be necessary first to realise, however, that there were differences which, in his view, the mass of people were not 'capable of accepting'. He felt that the BBC should avoid 'excessive condemnation of what West Indians did' in the United Kingdom, and should not be condescending. The guiding aim should always be to put the 'other side of the picture when dealing with subjects concerning West Indian immigrants'. In conjunction with previous concerns expressed, Fraser noted:

Alongside what Mr. Philips has said, I should like to say that before we begin to think seriously about improving relations, West Indians and others concerned with this problem must first accept that there are differences. What are the things, which appear to trigger this increase of racial feeling? One point that stands out to my mind is the desire on the part of, possibly, the Press and, possibly, even the BBC unconsciously perhaps to condemn excessively...in my view, any approach which suggests an attitude of condescending to tolerate West Indians would not get very far.⁶⁹

Mrs. P. Crabbe, Welfare Secretary for the National Council for the Unmarried Mother and Her Child, said it would help greatly if West Indians or Africans could be 'used more in programmes simply as people in their own right and in their own jobs', highlighting representations that stressed normalcy. She felt that the BBC could 'get away from the tendency of thinking of coloured people who appear on programmes only as entertainers'.⁷⁰ She noted that, because she was West Indian, she was sure that this would be one of the ways of helping with liaison and getting day-to-day acceptance. The Director General entirely accepted this point, yet proudly revelled in the appointment of a West Indian BBC announcer. He explained how the BBC had appointed Dwight Wyley, and another West Indian, Mr. Eric Abrahams, who would shortly join Panorama.

Mrs. Thirlwell, Adviser to the Paddington Overseas Students and Workers Committee, regretted that the BBC had publicly announced its appointment, noting that it should have been unnecessary to draw attention to a perfectly natural event. She notes:

For example, it is fine that we have a West Indian announcer, but probably you should not have said, 'We have appointed a West Indian announcer.' When Stuart Hall, for instance, was appointed to the Youth Council or whatever it is called, he was described as a lecturer in Richard Hoggart's department at Birmingham University; they did not say that he was a West Indian. When a child in Smethwick got typhoid, why not say that a child in Smethwick got typhoid instead of saying that it was a West Indian child? She may have been born here.⁷¹

Philip Mason of the Institute of Race Relations also expressed concern over the highlighting of difference. He discussed his appearance on Panorama years before, after which he received letters describing his participation on the programme as 'the same, old BBC brainwashing, putting across the fact that immigrants are just like anybody else':

Because there had been shown an educated West Indian and this was described as 'untypical and brainwashing'. This is the danger, obviously, if you put across a message too strongly. I should, therefore, very much like to second what Mrs. Crabbe said about making it natural and not too much of a message.⁷²

Mason discussed the possibility of a programme that provided a history of England's relationship to the West Indies, but concerns arose over the past colonial relationship. He noted that 'it would show that we in Britain owe a debt to the West Indies and this would almost be bound to show the

West Indies in the slave days and the arrival of people from Africa.' Despite this, Mrs. Jeffrey felt a series of programmes could help to provide history as to why slavery developed, and other myths 'which one has to kill'. Mason suggested that a highly educated audience would get the best out of the programme. Philips stated that balance of representations of social issues was essential. He felt that the press and television alike fall into the same rut of approaching issues with a degree of sensationalism and 'anything to incite'. Philips notes:

It is no secret, for example, that on Monday night on Gallery you had [the] Ku Klux Klan [on the programme], and by Wednesday night you had crosses being lit in Leamington Spa. It is all very well to talk about a lunatic fringe, but what is inciting this lunatic fringe and making them believe that these are the accepted and done things - and that they are in order is that this is what we are showing.⁷³

A highly important issue raised by Leeds University lecturer E. D. Butterworth was the continued onus on the BBC to educate the populace about subsequent race misunderstandings. He stated that on the question of prejudice, it was wrong to assume that people would automatically make the right judgments if presented with the facts about the constructs of race. He reminded Greene and other attendees that there was a need both for education of the leaders of the community, the intellectuals, and the public in the reasons for the British attitude to race. Butterworth further noted that if the BBC could show 'West Indians and other migrants in the position of human beings exercising their civic duties and responsibilities and facing up to the various local situations,' it would help social conflicts considerably. Similarly, Mr. G. W. R. Lines, Director of Education, Wolverhampton Borough Council, addressed ways in which children could be educated to see colour as immaterial. He felt if documentaries concentrated on various children playing together, and in school [the images] would produce aspects of racial understanding acceptable to 'both sides'. Greene noted that programmes of this sort 'had been done, from time to time'.⁷⁴

Other suggestions included niche programming that addressed specific audiences within the West Indian community, particularly mothers. The Woman's Hour, as mentioned by Greene, could be a programming block in which subjects of parenting and unwed motherhood, 'would fit in very naturally'. Crabbe noted that Sound broadcast many programmes regarding unmarried mothers, adoption, and so on. However, she was concerned that a programme at 12 o'clock midday is a 'great favourite, though social workers never listen to its content', losing an opportunity to learn more about immigrant mothers. Greene reassured Crabbe noting that people with whom the social worker works 'are at home (and) might turn to listen to it'. Miss I. Harrison of the Westminster City Council Welfare Officer noted that a problem of the future 'will be the acceptance of coloured English by our own communities, which means that we have to place emphasis on the English children, who are coloured but who speak like other English children.' Greene concurred, citing comments made by Crabbe and others. He then asked R. S. Postgate, Controller of Educational Broadcasting, to address education on the BBC. He noted that many programmes currently produced were those that concentrated on teaching English, as discussed in the previous conference.

However, when considering the content of these kinds of programmes, Dimes warns Postgate that the West Indians issue of assimilation and acceptance is different. She felt the BBC would go wrong if programmes featured the West Indies as too exotic and desirable, causing audiences to note,

"This is where they come from. That is where they belong. Why don't they go back to that sunny land? Why do they come here?" We do not want to [highlight West Indians] as being different from anyone else. We should be careful to guard against showing anything which perpetuates the difference between us [as citizens], which I should like to see got rid of.⁷⁵

Yet, Mr. W. Knight, Managing Editor - designate of Concord, said he would like BBC documentaries to show how culture, music and the arts in the West Indies had developed throughout the years. People

tended to associate the West Indies with Jamaica and Trinidad, and knew very little about the other islands, and when the BBC sent a team to Jamaica, footage should show people doing 'worthwhile jobs,' to help the people. Sir Learie Constantine noted that in the past, the pictures of the Colonies had shown only the huts and shanties - no pictures of the 'nice buildings in which the doctors and the lawyers lived'. It was important now, he argued, to project the successful man holding his place in the 'Western circle', but, equally important for West Indians to contribute in a way that would help to project 'a new society'. He noted that the BBC had a tremendous job to do, and with regard to the treatment of West Indian history, he saw no purpose in hiding the facts of slavery, for any discredit would fall on those who had made people slaves, and 'not on those who had been enslaved'. Bennett noted that there was frequently disagreement and animosity between Africans and West Indians and between West Indians from different islands, and that the BBC might be able to help in bringing them together in discussion. Constantine disagreed that this was a serious problem, and Philips noted that it was particularly unimportant compared with the main task of helping West Indians 'find their feet in society'.⁷⁶

Dimes asked whether consideration had been given by the BBC to doing programmes about multi-racial projects undertaken by people in areas where there were integration committees, as, for example, Sparkbrook in Birmingham. Butterworth said it would be wrong to assume a national pattern for immigrants' problems; the position, in terms of prejudice, changed depending on the area. He did not, however, think that there could be much lasting effect from getting people together to resolve differences and understand one another, nor could the BBC do a great deal to change public opinion. He did feel that the BBC might do something to explain the strains and stresses of moving from one country to another. Programmes could be featured that stressed the contribution of all immigrants, as could an exploration of common assumptions about jobs and housing. Such subjects could be highlighted within 'education programmes or in a tough kind of documentary like *Tonight* or *Panorama*'.⁷⁷

As the discussions concluded, the Director General said it appeared that West Indians and Indians and Pakistanis had differing sets of priorities. For West Indians, the problem of integration was fundamental, in that many of them wished to settle in Britain and become British. Asians, on the other hand, intended to go home eventually to their own countries. The overall group roundly disagreed, inferring that it was impossible to speak that generally about the issue. Greene noted that some Asians had told him and other BBC managers this, and that they have 'a different attitude toward integration. The idea has come up here, that [West Indians] are English children of another colour, did not come up with the Indians and Pakistanis; so to that extent there is a dilemma.'⁷⁸ Mr. Bennett said it often did not please West Indian parents when their children lost contact with the home country. Constantine said he welcomed the idea of West Indians as Black Englishmen. This was, in his opinion, a sign of successful integration. He regretted the housing difficulties, which caused many West Indians to rent from other West Indians, forcing them to reside in ghettos, and preventing them from moving into 'wider circles and achieving integration'. There is the question of whether a West Indian ceases to be a West Indian when he wants integration. Constantine notes:

I know where to go and where not to go. I have lived here twenty eight years and am quite content. I am more contented here than I am in my own country. That may be a reflection on me, it may be a reflection on my own society, but I beg them to make their contribution in fields other than the immediate circle in which they live. This would be a better way of advertising the fact that a West Indian has moved. If you keep to your own immediate circle in the face of opposition, of prejudice and of antagonism, how will you educate the rest of the world that we are making progress in London, in Liverpool or in Manchester?⁷⁹

Mr. Fraser said that although he agreed with Sir Learie, when touring schools he had been astounded to find racialism among the young. In the North, younger children under the age of eleven were less

racialised, but in the older age groups resistance to integration was hardening, and in the Midlands it was worse. Even in London and in the South, children showed very little interest in coloured people or the way they lived. One puzzling trend of the past three years (1962-65), of children aged between six and nine was to take on the prejudices of their parents. It was felt by many that the BBC could contribute by avoiding nursery rhymes such as *Ten Little Niggers* in children's programmes, and by directing programmes at parents to correct the attitude of their children. Mrs. Dimes said similar arguments could be applied to religious broadcasts in which imagery was based upon notions of 'white was pure and evil things, dark'. Sir Learie agreed that the problem really started because of adult influences, and that prejudice would have to be 'broken down in the adult world, not in schools'.⁸¹ When speaking to over 5000 students, his aim was to help the child stand up against a prejudiced parent.

R.D. Chapman said his own experience led to a similar conclusion. There was a need to educate the English towards integration; however, there was a need to educate West Indian communities in their responsibilities to the larger community in which they lived. This was vital because in areas where there was 'bad behaviour due to lack of understanding, prejudice was the result. Two-way education was needed.' Irons agreed with both speakers, noting that in Nottingham there was progress towards getting immigrants to identify with the larger community. It would be a great step forward if the BBC's programmes could emphasise that West Indians had to decide what role they were prepared to play in the community.

However, the suggestion made by many attendees was that the Service should 'not be thinking in terms of special programmes addressed to West Indians, whether immigrants or people born and long settled in the United Kingdom'.⁸¹ Instead, programmes should take into account that White and coloured people were living in a mixed community, and would be listening and watching those programmes together. It was on this basic concept that the BBC would have to build. Crabbe and others realized, however, that the mass media alone could not overcome all the problems. The Director General thanked those who had attended, and noted that the discussion had given the BBC many individual ideas to follow up. As Mr. Lines had said, the occasion would have influenced the BBC's thinking, and this was perhaps one of the most important things of all. When asked, the West Indian participants felt that the conference was helpful, but the events had not led to any specific commitments from the Corporation. Within the proceedings, attendees also had the opportunities to express concerns over the Service's plans for future race-related programming. Despite numerous comments that addressed possible reactions by White audiences to West Indian themed programming, several specific issues were raised. In brief:

1. The listening and viewing habits of West Indians and their preferences for radio or television was essential for the BBC's efforts;
2. Education of the British public in regard to West Indians and their ultimate acceptance as citizens was important for those not informed about Caribbean cultures;
3. Documentaries that examined the historical background between Britain and the West Indies would have been helpful;
4. The BBC should have shown both sides of the issue regarding immigrants; that is showing how both White Britons and immigrants are affected;
5. It was important to show the West Indies in a much more diverse way; highlighting more than just Jamaica and Trinidad;
6. When examining the islands, well-developed areas should also have been shown, not just poverty-stricken neighbourhoods;
7. The BBC needed more programming on radio or TV about multiracial projects undertaken to solve social tensions;
8. The BBC often did not report events highlighting positive progress toward integration;
9. Treatment of news stressed areas of conflict instead of resolution, bringing attention to racist groups and exciting the lunatic fringe;

10. When West Indians ran afoul of the law, there was a need to avoid excessive condemnation of them, yet this approach should not be condescending;
11. There was a need to address concerns about Black marriages being biologically unsound;
12. There was a need to concentrate on educating children more so than adults, many of whom had already formed opinions;
13. West Indians used for TV programs as subjects or presenters should increase, yet be featured simply as people in their own right, living their lives and working their jobs;
14. The suggestion made by many attendees was that the Service should not be thinking in terms of special programmes addressed to West Indians, but programmes which took into account that White and coloured people were living in a mixed community, and would be listening and watching those programmes together.

The representatives were highly concerned however, that once again, 'BBC programmes in general should lean toward integration rather than emphasising racial differences',⁸² something the Service had done throughout history within its constructions of West Indian culture and ethnicity.⁸³

Conclusion:

This essay acknowledges the BBC Television Service's approach to the highly sensitive issues of race, immigration and xenophobia. As a producer of popular and normative culture, the BBC undertook the ideological formation of audiences throughout the United Kingdom, its colonies and the world. As West Indians began to immigrate to England, the BBC began to produce these hopeful citizens and their culture in a fashion that would be more acceptable by White Britons. Special programming on race, immigration, government policies, and other related issues followed with mixed reactions from audiences, sometimes positive, yet often negative⁸⁴, particularly when no solution was offered to combat ignorance and conflict. Through the cultural authority of BBC television, West Indian immigration and subsequent problems were visually encoded as 'actual', creating representations of immigrants not through transculturalism, but by the authority of the BBC. Therefore, racial formation and postcolonial difference continued to be a social construct, which subsequently became a way of comprehending and explaining these new citizens.

However, West Indian settlers as the focus of these programmes often remained muted by comparison, able to offer little input on these representations and their ultimate affect upon the British public. These immigrants as settlers needed further opportunities as agents of change to tell their own stories and develop multiple narratives of the Afro-Caribbean experience; particularly through the seemingly liberal social framework of the BBC.

Sources from the Written Archives Centre provide insights on the presence of these 'imagined others', through meeting notes taken for Greene and managers during the year of the conferences. While discourses of liberalism, and integration abounded at this gathering, there remained notions of cultural difference and the problematic circumstances allegedly due to immigration. According to many attendees served by the BBC Television Service, these historiographic constructs of their Afro-Caribbean culture shown on television were not helping to establish an intercultural bonding that may supersede difference. There were attempts to address racism by the BBC that helped to deconstruct assumptions about race, yet frustrated audiences by a lack of resolution or guidance when it came to the social implications of post-colonial immigration.

Previously these Colonials had participated in the war as flyers, sailors, and fighters through recruitment efforts featured on radio and newsreels. After World War II had ended, those West Indians that came to England to train and fight were expected, and often demanded, to return from where they came.⁸⁵ Economic conditions in their homelands had not improved during the war, and in some cases became worse, forcing many Afro-Caribbeans to return to England seeking work or extended

military service. During the post-war era, the BBC's World Service radio created texts designed to educate these immigrants to the realities of living in England, but highlighted cultural differences. Yet, within years the arrival of West Indian men and two female stowaways on *the Empire Windrush* at Tilbury placed them into the very heartland of England, and via the 'mod con' of BBC television and British Pathe, found their very presence as hopeful citizens, amplified.

However, there was a need for autonomous self-expression of these hopeful citizens, allowing for an intrinsic self-definition of the Afro-Caribbean experience despite constructs of British nationalism and cultural supremacy through public education and entertainment. Even if not fully acknowledged by these dominant producers as fundamental in their programming schema, management had to engage with these subjects, due in large part to constructs of postcolonialism, nationalism, and subjectivity. Simultaneously however, discourses of those West Indian cultures represented resonated within the gathering, and challenged constructs of Britishness and Whiteness.

References

- ¹Reith, J. C. W. *Into the Wind*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1949, p. 103.
- ²Briggs, A. *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom, Volume 4: Sound and Vision*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979.
- ³Smith, A. *British Broadcasting*. Plymouth: David and Charles, 1974.
- ⁴Scannel, P. and Cardiff, D. *A Social History of British Broadcasting: Volume One 1922-1939 Serving the Nation*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991.
- ⁵Carpenter, H. *The Envy of the World: Fifty Years of the BBC Third Programme and Radio Three*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1996.
- ⁶Crisell, A. *An Introductory History of British Broadcasting*. New York: Routledge, 1997.
- ⁷Paulu, B. *British Broadcasting in Transition*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1961.
- ⁸Rich, P. B. *Race and Empire in British Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.
- ⁹Webster, W. *Englishness and Empire 1939-1965*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.
- ¹⁰Reith, J. C. W. *Broadcast Over Britain*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1924.
- ¹¹Boyle, A. *Only the Wind will Listen: Reith of the BBC*. London: Hutchinson and Company, 1972.
- ¹²Goldie, G. W. *Facing the Nation: Television and Politics, 1936-1976*. London: Bodley Head, 1977.
- ¹³Davidson, R. B. *Black British: Immigrants to England*. London: Oxford University Press, 1966.
- ¹⁴Benson, S. *Ambiguous Ethnicity: Interracial Families in London*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981.
- ¹⁵Byron, M. *Post-War Caribbean Migration to Britain: The Unfinished Cycle*. Aldershot: Avebury, 1994.
- ¹⁶Phillips, M. and Phillips, T. *Windrush: The Irresistible Rise of Multi-racial Britain*. London: Harper Collins, 1998.
- ¹⁷Goulbourne, H. *Caribbean Transnational Experience*. London: Pluto Press, 2002.
- ¹⁸Bhabha, H. *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge, 1994.
- ¹⁹Gillespie, M. *Television, Ethnicity and Cultural Change*. London: Routledge, 1995.
- ²⁰Brah, A. *Cartography of Diaspora: Contesting Identities*. London: Routledge, 1996.
- ²¹Murphy, P and Kraidy, M. eds. *Global Media Studies Ethnographic Perspectives*. London: Routledge, 2003.
- ²²Memmi, A. *The Colonizer and the Colonized*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1967.
- ²³Hall, S. The Whites of Their Eyes: Racist Ideologies and the Media. in Alvarado, M. and Thompson, J. O. eds. 1990, pp. 7-23.
- ²⁴Hall, S. *Cultural Dialogues in Cultural Studies*. London: Routledge, 1996.
- ²⁵Gilroy, P. *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993.
- ²⁶Gilroy, P. *Against Race: Imagining Political Culture Beyond the Color Line*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001.
- ²⁷Gilroy, P. *Postcolonial Melancholia*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2005.
- ²⁸Young, R. J. C. *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race*. London: Routledge, 1995.
- ²⁹Owusu, K. ed. *Black British Culture and Society*. London: Routledge, 2000.
- ³⁰McMillin, D. *International Media Studies*. Blackwell Publishing: Oxford, 2007.
- ³¹Bourne, S. *Black in the British Frame: Black People in British Film and Television 1896-1996*. London: Cassell, 1998.

- ³²Bourne, S. *Black in the British Frame: The Black Experience in British Film and Television*. London: Continuum, 2001.
- ³³Malik, S. *Representing Black Britain: Black and Asian Images on Television*. London: Sage, 2002.
- ³⁴Pines, J. ed. *Black and White in Colour: Black People in British Television since 1936*. London: British Film Institute, 1992.
- ³⁵Daniels, T. and Gerson, J. eds. *The Colour Black*. London: British Film Institute, 1989.
- ³⁶Little, K. *Negroes in Britain*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd, 1948.
- ³⁷Richmond, A. *The Colour Problem; a Study of Racial Relations*. Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1961.
- ³⁸Banton, M. *Roles: An Introduction to the Study of Social Relations*. London: Tavistock Publications, 1965.
- ³⁹Paulu, B. *British Broadcasting in Transition*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1961.
- ⁴⁰Belson, W. A. *The Impact of Television; Methods and Findings in Program Research*. London: Crosby Lockwood and Son, 1967.
- ⁴¹*The Times*, 23/6/48: 2.
- ⁴²Continuous audience research for television began in December 1949 when Robert Silvey, Head of BBC Audience Research, encouraged the formation of panels that would supply feedback for the BBC. Later that year, he went on radio and later television to appeal for cooperation from viewers. In a further effort to determine the ultimate reactions of audiences to the Race Relations programme specifically, Silvey conducted a pre-broadcast survey designed to measure attitudes of viewers towards race. However, opinions and attitudes on racism focused upon Africa including 29 statements about black—white issues, land, equality, and interracial marriage.
- ⁴³Rendall to A.C.O.S., 28/12/43, R34/305/1.
- ⁴⁴Zinkin, Taya. Women Talking. *Manchester Guardian*, 18/1/65.
- ⁴⁵Greene to Benn, 2/2/65, N/25/175/1.
- ⁴⁶Greene to Mason, 2/2/65, N/25/175/1.
- ⁴⁷Regional Controllers notes, 26/2/65, N/25/175, BBC WAC.
- ⁴⁸Shaw, Secretariat to the C.P.P. regarding a Programme Suggestion. 17/8/61, T16/175/2.
- ⁴⁹Minute 41 from the Director General's meeting with Regional Controllers, 8 March 1965, N/25/175/1.
- ⁵⁰Ref 49
- ⁵¹Thirkell to Pendlebury, 28/1/65, R/49/1095.
- ⁵²Meeting notes, 25/1/65, R/49/1095.
- ⁵³Arnell to DG, 26/2/65, R/49/1095.
- ⁵⁴Report from the DG, N/25/175, 19/5/65, BBC WAC.
- ⁵⁵A press announcement from Marshall to various press organizations, 6/7/65, N/25/175/1.
- ⁵⁶Programmes for Immigrants meeting held with members of the West Indian community in London. Present: Mr. A.G. Bennett (Blue Star House, MacDonald Road, Highhate Hill, N.19.); Mr. S.P. Bourne (Department of Economic Affairs); A.B. Burton (Welfare Officer, Reading Borough Council); Mr. E.D. Butterworth (Lecturer, Department of Extra-Mural Studies, Leeds University); Mr. R.D. Chapman (Head of Department of English for Immigrants, Birmingham); Mr. R. St. C. Charles (Office of the High Commissioner for Trinidad and Tobago); Sir Learie Constantine (Member of BBC General Advisory Council); Mrs. P. Crabbe (Welfare Secretary, National Council for the Unmarried Mother and Her Child and member of the Immigrants Advisory Committee, London Council of Social Service); Mrs. M. Dimes (Chairman, Wood Green Commonwealth Citizens' Consultative Committee); Mr. G.A. Evans (Information Officer, Public Relations Bureau, Hackney Borough Council); Mr. J.E. Fraser (Formerly West Indies Commission); Miss I. Harrison (Welfare Officer, Westminster City Council); Mr. E. Irons (City of Nottingham Education Committee); Mrs. P. Jeffrey (Kensington Citizens Advice Bureau); Mr. W. Knight (Managing Editor Designate of Concord); Mr. G.W.R. Lines (Director of Education, Wolverhampton Borough Council); Mr. P. Mason (Institute of Race Relations); Mr. C.E. Maynard (Deputy Head of Welfare Department, Office of the Commissioner of Eastern Caribbean Governments); Mr. R.E.K. Philips (Chief Welfare Officer, Office of the High Commissioner for Jamaica); Mr. J.F.C. Springford (British Council, Student Welfare Department); Mrs. D.P. Thirlwell (Adviser, Paddington Overseas Students and Workers Committee); Mr. A.R. Truman (Inner London Education Authority) Mrs. M. Winchester (National Council for Commonwealth Immigrants); Miss D.M. Wood (Secretary, Nottingham Commonwealth Citizens' Consultative Committee), 13 July 1965 N/25/175/1.
- ⁵⁷All management in attendance are noted as:
Sir Hugh Greene (Director General)
Mr. O.J. Whitley (Chief Assistant to Director General)
Mr. C.J. Curran. (The Secretary)

Mr. H.G. Campey (Head of Publicity)
Mr. D. Stephenson (Head of Overseas and Foreign. Relations)
Mr. F.G. Gillard (Director of Sound Broadcasting)
Mr. R. D'AMarriott (Assistant Director of Sound Broadcasting)
Mr. A.P. Monson (Chief Engineer, Sound Broadcasting)
Mr. G.E. Mansell (Chief of Hone Service and Music Programme)
Mr. J. A. Camacho (Head of Talks and Current Affairs, Sound)
Mr. P.M. Beech (Controller, Midland Region)
Mr. R. Stead (Controller, North Region)
Mr. D.F. Gretton (Assistant Head of Midland Regional Programmes)
Mr. R.S. Postgate (Controller, Educational Broadcasting)
Mr. D.M. Hodson (Controller, Overseas Services)
Mr. G. Steedman (Head of Overseas Regional Services)
Mr. D. G. Scuse (General Manager, Television Enterprises)
Mr. G. Del Strother (Head of Productions, Television Enterprises)
Mr. D.B. Mann (Secretariat). Controller's meeting notes, 6/9/65, E/2/930.

⁵⁸Programmes for Immigrants, 29/7/65, N/25/175.

⁵⁹Gretton to all, 19/8/65, N/25/175, BBC WAC.

⁶⁰Press Release, Sept 1965, N/25/175, BBC WAC.

⁶¹Further Education, 21/12/56, T16/175/2.

⁶²Whitley to Greene, 12/6/65, N/25/175.

⁶³Programme for immigrants meeting notes, 13/7/65, N/25/175/1.

⁶⁴Ref 63

⁶⁵Ref 63

⁶⁶Ref 63

⁶⁷Ref 63

⁶⁸Ref 63

⁶⁹Ref 63

⁷⁰Ref 63

⁷¹Ref 63

⁷²Ref 63

⁷³Ref 63

⁷⁴Controllers Meeting notes, 20/7/65, N/25/175/1.

⁷⁵Ref 74

⁷⁶Ref 74

⁷⁷Ref 74

⁷⁸Ref 74

⁷⁹Ref 74

⁸⁰Ref 74

⁸¹Ref 74

⁸²BBCWACT16/175/2

⁸³Controllers Meeting notes, 20/7/65, N/25/175/1.

⁸⁴Davidson, R. B. *Black British: Immigrants to England*. London: Oxford University Press, 1966.

⁸⁵Solomos, J. *Race and Racism in Contemporary Britain*. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989.