

## Going to Britain

*Originally a series of radio broadcasts, this pamphlet was primarily written by Caribbean men who were already living in London.*

### **The People around You**

From the time you start to live in England it is as if a sea of white faces is always around you. Don't forget this is no small island. In London alone there are more than eight million people living. [...]

### **You are the Stranger**

However, your greater problem will be getting along with your white neighbours. One thing you must always keep in mind is that their knowledge of your country is much less than your knowledge of theirs. [...] There are some parts of England where the sight of a coloured man is still an uncommon thing. [...] Children especially can be very curious about your colour. A child may point you out to its mother and exclaim: 'Look at that black man, mummy!'

### **No Offence Meant'**

Don't take offence at things like these. If in the house where you live, you see one or two of them whispering and pointing to you, it may well be that they are wondering why you wear your hat with the brim<sup>2</sup> turned up all around, for instance: it doesn't have to mean they are

making fun of you. You may be surprised at some of the questions they may ask you, and you might feel that they are insulting you on the sly<sup>3</sup>, but it is only their ignorance of you and your country. I know a Barbadian who was asked, in all seriousness, if the people in his country lived in houses or if they lived in the jungle, and also, if he had ever worn clothes before he came to England.

### **Politeness is the Key**

The way how people live here, you can be in the same house for years and never share a word with the other tenants". Respect that privacy. [...] They don't stand up on the doorstep gossiping, or form a crowd on the pavement to talk about the latest ballad. I notice some West Indians still have that habit and I can tell you it isn't one that English people like. What they like is politeness.

*Going to Britain?*, BBC Caribbean Service, 1959