

Windrush generation have been 'profoundly wronged', admits Prince William

Duke says racism remains 'all too familiar' for black people today at the unveiling of the first national monument for the generation

By [Hannah Furness](#), Royal Editor 22 June 2022 • 2:59pm



The Windrush Generation have been "profoundly wronged" and suffered racism in Britain that continues to this day, [the Duke of Cambridge has said](#), as he attended the unveiling of the first national monument in their honour.

The Duke, speaking to an audience including Windrush pioneers and their families in Waterloo Station, gave thanks for the "enormous contribution" of those who travelled from the Caribbean in answer to a "plea" from post-war Britain.

Saying that they had helped make the country what it is today, he acknowledged that they also faced serious challenges that continue to the present.

"Sadly, that is also the case for members of the Windrush Generation who were victims of racism when they arrived here, and discrimination remains

an all too familiar experience for black men and women in Britain in 2022," he said.

"Only a matter of years ago, tens of thousands of that generation were [profoundly wronged by the Windrush scandal](#).

"That rightly reverberates throughout the Caribbean community here in the UK as well as many in the Caribbean nations."



The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge arrive at Waterloo Station alongside Baroness Floella Benjamin Credit: John Sibley/Getty Images

He added: "Alongside celebrating the diverse fabric of our families, our communities and our society as a whole – something the Windrush Generation has contributed so much to – it is also important to acknowledge the ways in which the future they sought and deserved has yet to come to pass.

"Diversity is what makes us strong, and it is what reflects the modern, outward-looking values that are so important to our country."

The Queen also sent her own message of tribute to the "profound contribution" that the Windrush pioneers and their descendants have made to the UK.

"The unveiling at Waterloo Station on Windrush Day serves as a fitting thank you to the Windrush pioneers and their descendants, in recognition of the profound contribution they have made to the United Kingdom over the decades," she wrote in a letter included in the programme.

"It is my hope that the memorial will serve to inspire present and future generations, and I send you my warmest good wishes on this historic occasion."



The Queen met Margaret Beazley, the governor of New South Wales during an audience at Windsor Castle on Wednesday Credit: ANDREW MATTHEWS/AFP/Getty Images

It is believed to be the first time the Queen has officially marked Windrush Day.

Prince William echoed his grandmother's words to acknowledge the "immense" role the Windrush generation has played in the "fabric of our nation", after "answering a plea to help our country thrive again" following the Second World War.

Saying that many had already served with the RAF, he added: "These people didn't have to come. They volunteered to fight for King and country – in the full knowledge that many would never make it home again.

"Every part of British life is better for the half a million men and women of the Windrush Generation.

"There are simply too many people to list. And we know without question, that the Windrush Generation have made our culture richer, our services stronger, and our fellow countrymen safer."



Prince William acknowledged that tens of thousands of people had been 'profoundly wronged by the Windrush scandal' Credit: JOHN SIBLEY/AFP/Getty Images

The Duke made specific reference to his recent trip to the Caribbean with the Duchess, noting that it had taught him just how much "the past weighs heavily on the present".

"I want to say a profound thank you to every member of that generation, and the generations that have followed," he said.

"And I want you to know that you can count on mine and Catherine's continued support in helping us achieve a future they would be proud of."

The new monument, which received £1 million funding from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, was created as a "permanent place of reflection, fostering greater understanding of the Windrush Generation's talent, hard work and loyalty to Britain, inspiring future

generations forever".

The artwork is by the Jamaican artist Basil Watson and depicts three figures – a man, woman, and child – dressed in their "Sunday best" and standing on a pile of suitcases.



The sculpture depicts three figures dressed in their 'Sunday best' and standing on a pile of suitcases Credit: John Sibley/PA

It was officially unveiled by a small group representing the Windrush community across the generations.

Commenting on the sculpture, Mr Watson said: "It has been an honour to design and create this monument which pays tribute to the Windrush generation migrants as they arrived in Britain with their dreams and aspirations, courage and dignity, skills and talents.

"They arrived with the idea of laying a foundation for their families and their future, and a hope of contributing to a society that they expected would welcome them in return.

"From this seemingly auspicious beginning despite many challenges, they spread their culture across Britain influencing many aspects of the society.

"My parents, along with a great many others, took the long arduous voyage from the Caribbean with very little or nothing other than their aspirations, their courage and a promise of opportunity for advancement. This monument tells that story of hope, determination, a strong belief in selves and a vision for the future."



The Duchess speaks to schoolchildren ahead of the unveiling ceremony Credit: John Sibley/PA Wire

The Duke and Duchess arrived at Waterloo Station slightly ahead of schedule and spoke to attendees made up of Windrush pioneers, politicians, artists performing at the ceremony and schoolchildren.

The Duchess, wearing a white McQueen suit, met John Richards, 96, who arrived at Waterloo from Jamaica as a 22-year-old and went on to a career with British Rail.

Tipping his hat to the Duchess, he made her laugh several times during their warm conversation. "She is a very nice lady," he said.

He gave his approval to the statue, saying: "When I am gone, people will be able to look at it."

The Cambridges were accompanied by Baroness Floella Benjamin, the chair

of the Windrush Commemoration Committee, who thanked the Duke for his "passionate and powerful" speech.

"We look forward to working with you and Catherine for the years to come," she said.

"The National Windrush Monument will be a permanent place of reflection, celebration and inspiration for Caribbean communities and the wider public, especially children.

"It will act as a symbolic link to our past and a permanent reminder of our shared history and heritage for generations to come. I hope it will be a catalyst for other monuments across Britain commemorating the extraordinary contribution to this country by the Windrush generation."



The Duchess took part in a filming and photography workshop in Brixton earlier in the day

Earlier in the day, the Cambridges marked Windrush Day in Brixton where they met young people taking part in Elevate, a council programme to help under-30s break into the creative industries.

While William listened to a budding songwriter, Kate could not resist trying her hand with a shoulder-mounted video camera.

Davinia Clarke, 22, an illustrator and visual artist, said: "She wanted to understand how to put it on and move it around.

"I thought, 'Let's try and put it on her'. She was up for it! She did better than me. At one moment it literally just dropped off my arm. I was like, 'Oh gosh'. She said it was really heavy, and you need a lot of upper body strength."

William listened to Love Me, a song written by singer-songwriter Abdoulaziz Leloo Ndambi, 24, which he played to him on his phone.

"It's not like the new style, it's old RnB, soul, blues," Mr Ndambi said. "He said he liked it, and he was telling Kate it might be number one in the future. I pray it is, though!"



The Duke and Duchess met younger members of the British-Caribbean community representing the next generation of British creative talent Credit: Eddie Mulholland

The Duke told Alice Edwards, the cultural education manager for Lambeth Council which runs the Elevate programme: "Here is a great place to decide if you want to be an interviewer, to work the camera - the drawing and the singing has been awesome."

The Duchess added: "We also see the value of creativity across the board here. Putting it at the heart of the community is really important."

The MV Empire Windrush brought Commonwealth citizens from the West Indies to Britain between 1948 to 1971.

In 2018, it became a national scandal after the Government threatened to deport their descendants, saying they were in Britain illegally due to a lack of official paperwork despite working in the UK for decades.

A compensation scheme was established a year later, and has since been criticised by campaigners for the limited payments it has made.