

The History Of Migration to London/England

The African origin people

The first beginnings of migration to London by black minorities had their source in the early 16th century. Catherine of Aragon, the Queen of England, as the first wife of King Henry VIII of England and Princess of Wales, as the wife of Arthur, Prince of Wales, came to London and brought some African people as attendants with her. When trade lines began to open between London and West Africa, Africans slowly began to become part of the London population as slaves.

Later on London's residents started to become fearful of the increasing black population. Around this time Elizabeth I. declared that the black people were to be arrested and banned from her kingdom, although it was against the legislation. Elizabeth I issued an open letter on 11 July 1596 when the entire population of Britain was around 3 million.

“Her Majesty understanding that there are of late divers blackmoores brought into this realme, of which kinde of people there are already here to manie ... Her Majesty's pleasure therefore ys that those kinde of people should be sent forth of the lande, and for that purpose there ys direction given to this bearer Edwarde Banes to take of those blackmoores that in this last voyage under Sir Thomas Baskerville were brought into this realme the number of tenn, to be transported by him out of the realme. Wherein wee require you to be aydinge and assyting unto him as he shall have occasion, therof not to faile.”

Between the 17th – 18th centuries there was a rise of black migration to London. Britain was involved with the tri-continental slave trade (also known as the transatlantic slave trade, refers to the trade in slaves that took place across the Atlantic ocean) between Europe, Africa and the Americas. Black slaves were attendants to sea captains and ex-colonial officials as well as traders, plantation owners and military personnel. This is shown in the growth of the black population in the northern, eastern and southern areas of London.

Towards the end of the 18th century, at the height of the slave trade, there was a large black population estimated variously between 10000 and 20000, mainly centred around London and the ports, in a total population in England and Wales of 9000000.

Most migrants who came from West Africa, were male, and lived mainly in London or the other major ports of Liverpool, Bristol and Cardiff.

In the 1780s there were about 5000 black people of African origin living in London. Most of them had freed themselves from slavery. Some found work as musicians, waiters or servants, a few became sweepers, for a small pay, they cleaned the paths of London.

In the early 19th century, more groups of black soldiers and seamen were resettled after the wars against Napoleon's Empire and settled in London. In 1807 the British slave trade was abolished and the slave trade was abolished completely in the British Empire by 1834. Fewer black people were brought into London from the West Indies and parts of Africa.

The Asian Migration Movement to England

Britain and India started their contact in 1600, when Elizabeth I gave the British East India Company permission to trade in South Asian spices and silks. India came under the direct control of the British Empire in 1858. High numbers of Indian sailors, as well as Chinese sailors, lived for periods around the London docks from the 18th century. Onwards these foreign sailors who were employed by British shipping companies were much neglected. They were often left in port, destitute until the next ship sailed.

There was no organised migration of Indians into Britain before World War 2. Small numbers of sailors, students, and professionals had been entering Britain since India's first contact with the Empire. Most returned after their business was done. British families returning from India brought Indian domestic servants or nannies, to London. The period of highest migration from India to England was 1955-1975.

Most of the early Chinese arrived as seamen, after the contracts of Nanking in 1842 and Peking in 1860 opened up China to British trade. However, their population in Britain remained very small. In 1871 it was recorded as 207, and in 1911 it were 1,319. Since the 1990s students and workers from the Chinese mainland have been arriving in London in search of educational and employment opportunities. The Chinese community began to move into Soho, where the Chinese restaurant business took off. Chinese, mainly from Hong Kong and the New Territories, came to London to work in these new businesses. Chinatown grew up around Gerrard Street during the late 1960s.

The Caribbeans in London

Africans were brought to London from the Caribbean in the late 16th century because of Britain's role in the slave trade. Those who came via the Caribbean had been transported from Africa to work on the Caribbean plantations as slave labour. After slavery was abolished in 1834, Caribbeans continued to come to London, basically as students, professionals and government officials.

In the time of the First World War over 15,000 Caribbean men fought in the British West Indies Regiment. This number doubled during the Second World War, while many others carried out essential work in Britain.

The opportunity to find work in Britain was taken up most in the Caribbean. The arrival of the ship "Empire Windrush" in June 1948, which carried passengers from Jamaica wishing to start a new life in the United Kingdom, was the beginning of a large movement of Caribbean people, at the beginning workers but then families and family members. By 1961 around 177,000 Caribbeans had arrived in Britain, of whom around 100,000 had settled in London, mainly working in transport and construction.

The migration of many people to London made the city much more colorful, even if it should not be called migration at first but rather transport because of the slave trade. After the abolition of slavery, London has shown itself as the recipient of many ethnic groups and thereby changed its face.



William Hogarth's *Noon* from 1738 shows a black London resident.



West Indian immigrants arrive at Victoria Station, London, in 1956.



Fresh off the boat: Jamaican immigrants are welcomed off the Windrush at Tilbury.



Caribbeans walking thru the streets of London.



Indian Immigrants who are permitted to enter London (Photo was taken at Victoria Station in 1959)



A family of Asian immigrants arriving at Gatwick Airport, London in 1968.

Valentin Brodhagen, 12c

Sources: <http://www.museumoflondon.org.uk/>
<http://www.wikipedia.org/>