

## ANDREW WYNTER INTERVIEW

Key:

EHdK: Dr Eve Hayes de Kalaf (Interviewer)

AW: Andrew Wynter (Respondent)

Date/Location:

4<sup>th</sup> October 2022. The Legacy Centre of Excellence, Aston, Birmingham.

**EHdK 00:03 I'm here in Birmingham with Andrew Wynter who is the Chief Executive Officer of the Passport, Immigration and Citizenship Agency also known as PICA. First and foremost, Andrew, thank you very much for agreeing to meet with me today. I wanted to know a bit about what we're doing here. What is happening at the moment in Birmingham?**

AW 00:29 The Passport, Immigration and Citizenship Agency [PICA] is doing what we call Access Jamaica. It is part of our strategic diaspora initiatives which we started around two years ago from 2019 where we have decided to reach out to the Jamaicans living overseas to provide them with the services of the agency which provides passports, citizenship services as well as immigration status. Because we have found that many Jamaicans living overseas, especially those who have left Jamaica for a long time, are unaware of a lot of the developments and the changes that have taken place in Jamaica. Many of them want to come back to Jamaica. They want to retire there, they want to purchase homes, they want to obtain certain benefits, transact business. And many times, they're having difficulties because they don't have any up-to-date Jamaican documentation. Some of them have left Jamaica as far back as 50 years ago and they would like to have a new passport. So, what we have done is... rather than waiting for them to come to us, we are coming to them. We have reached out into the communities overseas. And they are now providing them with the service. Even though we have the missions through our Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the High Commissions, the embassies, sometimes it is a challenge for persons to go to those places to get the information and sometimes to process their documents. It takes a very long time. And they're having some serious challenges. So, in responding to those challenges, we have decided to come out. We can deal with the issues right here. And we have found it has been so well accepted, so appreciated. We have done it in Toronto, Canada. Hartford, Connecticut. Fort Lauderdale, Atlanta and Orlando. Everywhere there are large bodies, pockets of Jamaicans overseas. And we have seen where people from the 1960s...in fact, yesterday there was a man who has been in the UK since 1959. And he came to get his passport done. And he's like, you know, he can't believe it.



**EHdK 02:58 Tell me something about this man. What's his story?**

AW 03:03 He came up with his parents in 1959. And he came up as a child. And at that time, he had...you had a kind of Jamaican passport, but it was like...I think it says British Overseas Territory at the time [this would have been a Citizen of the UK & Colonies CUKC passport]. Because we weren't independent. We were a part of the British Empire. So, he came up on that passport and now he has been living here all his life and then he wanted to find out if he can get back his own Jamaican passport.

**EHdK 03:38 How old was he when he came to the UK?**

AW 03:42 He said he was around six.

**EHdK 03:44 Okay, so he was a young child. And as we've heard in other interviews that we've done, children would come on their parents' passports but then had no documentation of their own.**

AW 03:55 That's it. He had no documentation until he got a British passport when he became an adult and then now, he would like his Jamaican passport. And once he got his Jamaican birth certificate and everything...he was able to obtain back his Jamaican passport on his own for the first time. And I mean, he was so overwhelmed. And these are the things that makes this kind of event so special. Because, in fact even today as we speak...just as you came and saw me, there were two couples there and they just brought in their grandparents. Right? And these people have probably been in the UK from the 1940s or the 1950s. And they are now making sure that their children and their grandchildren obtain Jamaican citizenship. I guess you could say that they are a part of this generation that came from way back. Came into the UK shortly after the war to help rebuild the UK. But they are now...their generations...and we are so happy to be here to know that we can facilitate. And they have brought all their documentation, their birth certificates.

**EHdK 05:09 What specific documentation are you asking them to provide? I know there are different cases.**

AW 05:14 All right. So, for the grandmother, she has to bring her Jamaican birth certificate. Then we have to look at her children to make sure her name is on her children's British birth certificate and her grandchildren so we can establish that lineage back to her so that they are known as Jamaican. They will obtain citizenship by descent. So, they're getting their Jamaican citizenship by virtue of their grandparents and them being descendants of Jamaicans. And with that now, those grandchildren and children can obtain Jamaican passports, right? So, it helps them to reconnect. And we have found that is so important to them. And many people have been up here. Quite a number of them are now reaching retirement age. In fact, there was a gentleman here this morning. He's 72 and he said he's going back to his friends and telling them all about it! And this is what makes this so

important. And, you know, as they have transitioned through...they are now reaching retirement. They own property in Jamaica. Some of them want to come back home to Jamaica and do business in Jamaica. And by having your Jamaican passport, it makes life that much easier.

**EHdK 06:41 And for the perhaps older people that you've spoken to, have they been to Jamaica at any point?**

AW 06:48 A few of them. Some of them have been here [in Jamaica] like 10 years ago, 15 years ago and they want to go back. But what happened is once you land with your British passport, then you're treated like a British national. So, you're only there for six months. They don't want to spend years, they just want to retire. Some of them have wanted their pension transfer so they want to live there. They want to come out of the cold. They say, "I've had enough of the cold." We can understand that.

**EHdK 07:21 How do people react then when they arrive in Jamaica? Do some people arrive in Jamaica and think that they can stay and then find out that they have to...?**

AW 07:30 Yeah, well after six months if you land on your British passport, you have to leave. Or we give them an extension of stay. And because we know some of them are Jamaicans, we tend to give them...they can get what is called unconditional landing which is allowing them to remain there as long as they want.

**EHdK 07:46 Is that a stamp? It's a stamp in the passport. So, you give this stamp to, as I understand it, to people who are of Jamaican descent and Jamaicans but they're not in possession of a Jamaican passport?**

AW 08:01 In fact, this morning, a lady got it. And she cried. No, I'm serious. She cried. Because she was so happy. I know that she can travel to Jamaica, you know, without any issues at all. When you see these things happen. When we...growing up in Jamaica, we hear that...I don't think there is no Jamaican in Jamaica today who doesn't have a relative who is not either in Canada, the US or the UK or have not migrated at some time. So, we are all familiar with, you know, a lot of the stories about our relatives. I had uncles who worked in the British railway. And so, we know that many of them have transitioned and have worked very hard to help to build the British society. So, to get them a chance and their children and grandchildren to help to build a Jamaican society. I mean, we're very happy and pleased to facilitate that. And that's why we actually invite like Jamaica national VMBS...Victoria Mutual Building Society like a bank. And Jamaica National is like a bank as well. And this time we have a Registrar General Department. So, like Jamaica National, Victoria Mutual Building Society, chair of financial institutions in Jamaica. This allows persons now if they want to get their pensions and if they want to do financial transactions and remit money to Jamaica, it's easy for them. And when they go to Jamaica now because they have an account and there's a banker, they can just withdraw money. It allows them

to purchase property easier and acquire other assets in Jamaica much easier. The other thing too is we have the Registrar General Department. They deal with marriage certificates, birth certificates, deed poll and other identity documents which are required to have passports. Because one of the things we have found is that many Jamaicans came to the UK on a document called a red certificate of birth. It's not your birth certificate. It's just a document which you got at the hospital which says that you were born and the date and everything.

**EHdK 10:32 I love that concept. It's the certification that you exist! We know you exist, and we can see you, but it's is not an official registration.**

AW 10:40 Exactly. So many of them have come down because the Registrar General is here today. They are now applying for their Jamaican birth...proper birth certificate for the first time. And these documents which are critical to them. Critical to them in so many ways.

**EHdK 10:58 So here in Birmingham, what are the main problems that come up...the main stumbling blocks that you find?**

AW 11:07 So some of the issues that many Jamaicans have is they don't have the proper documentation. Especially those who came to the UK in the 1950s and early 1960s. They didn't come under the birth certificate.

**EHdK 11:24 So you're talking specifically about people who are called the Windrush generation?**

AW 11:30 They came in the 1950s and the 1960s. They would have been the Windrush generation because some of them didn't even require passports at that time to come to the UK. They just bought their ticket, joined the ship and then came with the documents. So, some of them, they are just obtaining their documents now for the first time. So, they are getting their birth certificates properly, they're getting their passports now and really establishing back themselves. That link to Jamaica. And it is so important. We feel very good to know that we are contributing to them because some of them, you know, the adults felt lost without it. And now the fact that they can regain it and their children, I know properly benefitting from all of that. Because it was a very unfortunate thing for those. Well, we heard about it in Jamaica what happened with the Windrush generation and some of the issues. My agent, this agent in particular, who we assisted was that many of them who may have retired or came back to Jamaica, we had to assist in locating them, ensuring that they had their passports or their documentation, providing our Ministry of Foreign Affairs who would then report back then and give their account for those persons.

**EHdK 13:02 Let's explain that process then. I was recently in Jamaica, and I went to Open Arms Development Centre which is one of the places that receives young people. Anybody really but anybody who's been deported from the UK.**

AW 13:21 They would prefer to call them irregular removed migrants [Involuntary Returned Migrants] IRM...involuntary...

**EHdK 13:34 Involuntary Removed [Returned] Migrants [IRM]. And part of that process is to ensure that these people can access their Jamaican documentation, were they entitled to it. What kind of involvement has PICA had, or does it continue to have, to support, for example, people who might find themselves - who have come from overseas, maybe the US or Canada or the UK, and are in Jamaica - and would need access to these kinds of services?**

AW 14:07 Where PICA is very important is from two perspectives. One, we have had where persons, for example...I think the change with the British law, I think, in the 1980s where if your parents are in a country illegally and you were born in the UK, you didn't have right of abode [in the UK]. I think they changed the law. So, what that does...these persons if they are removed from the UK, even though they are born here [in the UK]. I'm not sure but I think the citizenship law speaks more specific to that. What we have to do when they are brought to Jamaica is we have to provide them with their Jamaican citizenship and give them their Jamaican passports.

**EHdK 14:58 And what does that process entail then? The provision of Jamaican citizenship?**

AW 15:02 First they would have to get their parents' birth certificate. Then they have to bring their certificate of birth issued here in the UK when they were born. And then, once they bring those documents, they apply for their Jamaican citizenship. And once we approve that citizenship by descent, then they can apply for their Jamaican passport.

**EHdK 15:25 Okay. That is a process that might sound like a straightforward kind of bureaucratic exercise. But in reality...**

AW 15:36 There are issues. There are issues sometimes because the parents' name might not be spelled properly. Sometimes the information that is provided...you need to validate that information. And again, where the challenge is if the father didn't have a proper Jamaican birth certificate so they have to now...go to the Registrar General's Department, get the document from them, then they can apply because sometimes, as I said, many of these persons from Jamaica, they did not come up necessarily with a proper birth certificate. They came up with a document that's a [red] certificate of birth. So, they probably didn't come up...they bought their ticket and joined a boat and come to Jamaica...come to the UK. And we have to now re-establish back all of those....

**EHdK 16:32 Have you had situations in which people don't see themselves as Jamaican at all?**

AW 16:36 Yes. Especially those, they're born here [in the UK]. They are born here [UK]. They grew up here [UK] for 30 years. And, I mean, they have no connection whatsoever with Jamaica. Alright? So, they are now in Jamaica and we have to assist them as best as possible.

**EHdK 16:55 What do you think about that situation?**

AW 16:59 It's unfortunate but every country has its laws. And I think we just need to exercise some discretion. And we had a particular case in Jamaica where there was a gentleman who came up during the Windrush time. And he was here for, like, 40 years. He came home. He came back to Jamaica. And he was not allowed to return to the UK.

**EHdK 17:29 Who was stopping him from returning to the UK?**

AW 17:33 The British, the UK Government said he can't come back. Anyway, it went in the press. It was in the media. It was in the Gleaner. And eventually, I think, the matter came and the Home Office allowed him to return. So, we have to assist those persons in any way we can because, at the end of the day, especially if they're Jamaicans, we got our specific requests from our Ministry of Foreign Affairs to...I think they wanted us to find out if any of the persons in Windrush was deported to Jamaica and we had to participate in that exercise. As the agency, we are responsible for the Jamaicans...to process the Jamaicans who are deported from any foreign country.

**EHdK 18:32 And what was the outcome of that exercise?**

AW 18:34 I think we found maybe two or three.

**EHdK 18:37 So very low numbers. What year was that?**

AW 18:42 That was in like 2017.

**EHdK 18:45 Okay, so you looked specifically...**

AW 18:48 Yes, we got a specific request to find out because they sent down some information to us and we had to check if any of these persons... also we had to check if any persons who came back to Jamaica were a part of...because they submitted a list to us, and we had to check that list against our border system information. And they did find some of them were actually retired and are living in Jamaica. I think because there was some benefit or some compensation. So, they had to be tracing a lot of those. So, we found quite

a few of them and those...I don't remember the exact number to be honest. It was some time ago. We provided that information to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

**EHdK 19:45 The compensation was coming from the British government? So was that part of the Windrush Compensation Scheme?**

AW 19:52 I think so, yes.

**EHdK 19:55 So what liaison then did you have, did PICA have, with the British government?**

AW 19:59 Everything went through Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

**EHdK 20:03 Okay and they worked specifically with the British High Commission who worked with the British Home Office. Have you had any direct involvement with, for example, anybody from the Home Office? Have they visited Jamaica or looked at the facilities?**

AW 20:19 The only time we have any direct relationship, we have our programme with the Home Office here where we actually have an immigration officer from PICA who is assigned to the Jamaican High Commission who, for the last three years, anyone who has been returned to their country, they have to do the vetting and check in to make sure that they're actually Jamaicans. And that all their documentation is in place before they're actually returned to Jamaica.

**EHdK 20:47 Okay, so you have a representative from PICA working at the moment at the Jamaican High Commission in London?**

AW 20:51 Who liaisons with the Home Office directly as it relates to any issues with...

**EHdK 21:00 That's really interesting. Have you had any cases of anybody who, from any other country, is in Jamaica as well? Because I know there's a high level of people from the UK, Canada and the US. But have you had any issues of people, I don't know, coming from other places?**

AW 21:22 Who end up in Jamaica? Being deported to Jamaica? Not that I'm aware of because we have a very strict screening process. The process is that if they want to deport somebody, they have to send the information to us. We then have to verify and validate. And we have to wait for the communities to confirm that this person was actually born in Jamaica, right? I didn't say...because of the nationality issues who will get the nationality of their parents. Those now will get citizenship by descent, but I can't recall anyone of another nationality.

**EHdK 22:03 And so before somebody is deported then PICA....**

AW 22:09 We have to sign out, yes. We have to sign out.

**EHdK 22:11 So do you know how many people have come in, for example? Okay, and that's verified. That means the process is clear for people who were born in Jamaica but what about those people who were born in the UK? Does that further complicate...?**

AW 22:27 Well, I think there's a process now because recently we haven't seen anything like that. But I think there's a process now where they appeal their cases. And it's going to appeal. So, we haven't seen any of that recently.

**EHdK 22:42 Talk us through what's happening here today in Birmingham because you've got a really big operation that is going on. It's quite impressive. Talk me through the setup. Imagine that I've come here to say that I think that I have a claim to Jamaican citizenship and I would like to find out more information. What would the process be?**

AW 23:05 What we have actually done is brought the PICA operation that we have in Jamaica here to Birmingham. So, we have approximately 20 staff here. We have brought up persons...to process persons for citizenship. We have brought up persons for passports. We have brought up our investigation team if they want to help and assist persons who may have lost their passports. And we are also doing photographs. Anything that is required to assist persons in the process. So, we have brought our Jamaican operations here. So, if you, for example, came in and you have heard that your father was a Jamaican and you would like to now become a citizen of Jamaica, we have the forms here. You can take the photographs. And as long as you bring all the documentation that is required...we have brought up our own notary officials. We've got a Justice of the Peace. Once we verify the information and you have appeared before us, then you can actually start the process to obtain your Jamaican citizenship. And you can actually apply for your passport at the same time. Many Jamaicans who, as I said before, who did not have their passports before they now can...if they have lost their passports or they have lost their passport and they want to replace it, we can do that for them. If they want to renew their passports even though they haven't renewed in the last 40 years, we are here today.

**EHdK 24:42 So you have people who are bringing passports from the 1960s, 1970s. What's the oldest one that you've seen?**

AW 24:51 1962. The oldest one I think was from 1969 [1959]. It just blew me away.

**EHdK 24:59 Tell me about the differences now because we know that things have been processed much more efficiently, right? There's been fundamental changes to**



**the way in which people are claiming their documentation and that it is being processed.**

AW 25:18 One other thing. The first time, all passports used to be handwritten. Now all passports, just like the British passport, they go through...they're not machine-readable passports. We didn't bring that machinery here. Everything has to go back to Jamaica to be processed. We have come a long way with our production facilities. And very soon we will actually be migrating to e-passports like in the UK. So, we'll have e-passports as well. In early 2023, we should be transitioning over to e-passports. So many Jamaicans [either] their passports are handwritten and the pictures are pasted in. They are now seeing a different picture integrated into the page. And everything is printed out properly, laser engraved. So, they have seen a lot of developments. We had an old blue book, hardcover book. Our passport is a dark blue passport closely resembling the same colour of the American passport. And it's much...[it] have all the features of a modern travel document. So, you know, it's ironic when the people get back their passports, they feel so good. You know, they've gotten back that little piece of Jamaica.

**EHdK 26:53 How did you become involved with PICA? What was your career trajectory?**

AW 26:59 Actually, I was in a private sector. I used to work...I was head of security for GraceKennedy for a while. And then actually entered into the public sector as the Senior Director for Investigation and Surveillance. So, I was in charge of that unit that you also have to do the investigations and the verification of Jamaicans who were being deported. Whether they were coming from the UK or Canada or the USA. We had to verify their nationality. I was in that position for about four years. And then I was promoted to the role of....

**EHdK 27:47 Sorry, people being deported from the UK to Jamaica?**

AW 27:50 UK to Jamaica, Canada to Jamaica, the USA to Jamaica. So, I was in that role. And I liked that role because it gave me the opportunity to learn everything about the agency's operation. And then I was promoted in 2016 to the role of Chief Executive Officer. So, with that knowledge it really helped me, and it was coming out of that background that one of the initiatives we really wanted to do was to help the Jamaicans in the diaspora because seeing the problems and the challenges they had.

**EHdK 28:31 And what would be the main challenges that a person from the Jamaican diaspora would be experiencing?**

AW 28:39 A lot of them is because they don't have their Jamaican passport. They want to buy property. They want to do banking. They want to do business in Jamaica.

**EHdK 28:48 So, these are things that very much have a private sector or a business-like focus which obviously has a benefit for Jamaica. It helps to grow the Jamaican economy. And also, the involvement of the banks and the help with pensions. That's all very important. What impact does it have on...or what importance does it hold for an everyday person? Maybe for somebody who isn't there to invest? What value?**

AW 29:17 That's a form of Jamaican identification because many times when they're doing other things, they want a driver's licence, that Jamaican passport is their form of national identification. Because in Jamaica you [need your] driver's licence, your voter registration or your passport. And in many instances, because they don't live in Jamaica, they don't have their voter registration, they don't have their driver's licence but they can get their passports.

**EHdK 29:45 And tell me about the National ID card. How does that fit in with...?**

AW 29:48 That is something to be rolled out very soon. And that will be another form of identification.

**EHdK 29:58 So was there no...It's called NIDS [National Identification System], right? Was there no national identity card before?**

AW 30:05 No, the only identity document that you could have from birth to 18 was your passport. Everything else came after 18. Your voter registration, your driver's licence...but anything between 0-18 was only your passport.

**EHdK 30:28 Was that inherited from the British model? Because in the UK there's historically been quite a pushback against introducing a national ID card for UK citizens. And part of it is very different to our neighbours in Europe, for example, in France, in Spain, where national ID cards are very [inaudible]. And I just wondered if that links back to maybe the colonial relationship?**

AW 30:59 I really don't know. I know the push has been for us because in Jamaica we need to...outside of your passport, what's the other form of national identification? So, I'm not sure...it is actually something that they wanted to start from as far back as 1974. But we have just never gotten around to it. And, finally, the government decided push forward ahead with it.

**EHdK 31:29 So, legal identity documents, for example. Something that you would use at PICA to confirm someone's identity would be their driver's licence, voter registration, passport. Anything else?**

AW 31:41 And their birth certificate. They must have their birth certificate.

**EHdK 31:45 From the UK or from wherever?**

AW 31:49 Wherever. The birth certificate for the Jamaicans who are born Jamaican are the citizenship certificate and those documents when they're authenticated would be the breeder document that would support your application by a Jamaican passport. And that is what we use to issue a Jamaican passport.

**EHdK 32:09 Tell me about the e-passports then. This new exciting system coming in.**

AW 32:16 The e-passport. We are getting the e-passport which basically is again a much more robust identity document where identity is known in its digital form and it's stored on a chip along with what is on the...in machine readable zone. And that is now improving the strength of our passport. And to make it a much stronger identity document as well as a travel document. And it's bringing us in line with the rest of the world. I mean, approximately 200 countries have gotten an e-passport. They haven't gone to the same level as the British where they have the polycarbonate page which has the embedded...we are not sure if the British passport deals with finger...biometrics...Yes, I want to say facial...facial recognition.

**EHdK 33:17 I apologise about the banging. We have some building work going on...Can I ask...who is helping you with that? Is this being outsourced to any private companies?**

AW 33:38 Canadian Bank Note provides Jamaica with our passports. Canadian Bank Note that's a company that provides passports for us. So, they are the persons who are helping us to migrate to e-passports.

**EHdK 33:55 That's a mammoth operation, right? To install...also because of the huge influx of tourists that you get. How many major airports are there in Jamaica?**

AW 34:09 We have three international airports. Two major and one minor. So, for the Jamaicans...just over three million Jamaicans are eligible for passports. But what we have to do is have a proper border management system to process the volume of tourists coming into the country which I must say since the pandemic has started to recover and is recovering quite well. So, I mean, reading the e-passport for the UK. Well, we're modernising our border management system to treat that. But the Jamaican passport now is also bringing us in line with the UK requirements. So, in the UK they now have facilities to read e-passports.

**EHdK 34:59 So how much engagement does PICA have with the UK High Commission in Kingston?**

AW 35:04 We have quite a bit. One of the things the British High Commission, the government, has helped us...we have implemented a document which helps us to identify fraudulent documents.

**EHdK 35:18 So how does that process work?**

AW 35:20 For example, we know that there are a lot of forged travel documents. People use forged birth certificates for a driver's licence.

**EHdK 35:27 What would be the motivation for doing that?**

AW 35:29 Again, to reduce the vulnerability of our documents or any attempt by a person to use fraudulent documents.

**EHdK 35:38 I think the question is, why would a person travel on a false document?**

AW 35:44 Well, yeah, human smuggling, human trafficking of persons. And even in Jamaica we have persons who try to smuggle Jamaicans and try to smuggle a person or traffic a person many times they're travelling on fraudulent documents. So, it's very important for us to be able to identify those fraudulent documents. And to put a dent and prevent any trafficking or smuggling. Because countries recognise a country that facilitates human trafficking. It impacts your rating. I think there are tier one or tier two countries for trafficking. It even affects your passport and your travel documents.

**EHdK 36:24 And at present when people arrive in Jamaica, for example, if they arrive in Kingston...the process is...it's the old process, right, of walking up to an immigration officer?**

AW 36:37 There are two things. You can go through our automated border kiosk.

**EHdK 36:41 Which is for...is that correct? For CARICOM?**

AW 36:44 For everybody. Or you can go to an officer. So, we have some level of automation now which will be expanded shortly. And we have the standard officer who does the inspection of your passport.

**EHdK 37:00 Okay, so what involvement has the...you said the High Commission, they...**

AW 37:04 The funding. They provided the funding through the FCDO, the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office. And I think for the document forensic lab was through the immigration international part of the Home Office. And the other side, we have the immigration person assigned to the Jamaican which is part of our project with the UK Government in terms of ensuring that the whole compliance person being removed from the UK to Jamaica...persons are fully compliant, that all the documentation is right on information. So, you know, all of these things.

**EHdK 37:58 And when would PICA meet with the British High Commission, for example? Are there specific meetings or working groups or teams that...?**

AW 38:11. Yes, for various things. For example, sometimes we made our investigation and surveillance unit team work closely with the British High Commission and they meet with us from time to time to discuss if there are issues or challenges. For example, they might receive a Jamaican passport. They might ask us to verify or confirm that this was genuinely issued by the agency. We also meet with them for various things, for various issues which might occur. You might have a British national who may need to be removed from Jamaica or for them to issue a travel document. So, we meet with them intermittently. In fact, one of the reasons they provided quite a bit of training for our staff...I think PICA for document identification.

**EHdK 39:09 And would that be people who've come over from the UK to give workshops?**

AW 39:13 Persons have come over and we have had a situation where a few persons in PICA have been sent to the UK to the training.

**EHdK 39:21 Oh, tell me more about that. I'm interested in hearing more about those connections.**

AW 39:25 We sent officers from the National Document Forensic Lab up here. And they have received training, advanced training, on how to identify fraudulent documents, you know.

**EHdK 39:39 So the concern, the main focus, is on fraud? It's not on, for example, helping Jamaicans like you're doing today?**

AW 39:55 This is entirely our own. This is the government.

**EHdK 39:58 What would be the main concerns do you think of the British government in terms of documentation issues? We've said fraud already and helping with maybe the acquisition of e-passports and better equipment and machinery that helps the reading of the passport.**

AW40:24 One of the areas that they help, we work closely with them is...especially in terms of identifying any suspected travellers...or assisting to track persons. But I think the primary thing though is to try to ensure that persons who may have been deported from the UK for any reason, or nobody who is of interest, is not sent back to the UK...or their ability to travel. So, we work closely with them because, you know...so that is something that we work closely with the British High Commission on.

**EHdK 41:12 And how do you see that situation of people who...they might not have a legal right, for example, to remain in the UK but the push basically of the UK to effectively ensure that these people can't return? So, they are deporting people from the UK and sending them - I don't like this terminology - but sending them back, right? The idea that the UK is expelling people who have a criminal record, people who might have mental health issues or people who have not...people who are undesirable, basically, for the UK to keep. How do you see that as in terms of the impact that has on Jamaica?**

AW 42:03 Well, the simple fact is that every country has the right to ensure that their citizens are protected and not facing any undue risks. So, if Jamaicans and any country...and they come to live and remain here [in the UK]...to go to school or raise families or for business. The government of the UK has to ensure that those persons can live without fear of doing business or anything. So, if Jamaicans are undesirables but they are also on the opposite side of the law and the offence that they committed is one that will cause you to be deported...you can't argue with that. But I want to say that is important, that we don't have abuse of the process. And I think that is important.

**EHdK 43:06 So, the setup you said today has been really ambitious. It looks like it's going brilliantly. You said that you've already had multiple operations that have taken place across Canada and the US. Is this your first visit to the UK then? What's your initial impression then of how it's going?**

AW 43:30 It started off a little slow but today, certainly, we have seen a much more...it has picked up quite a bit. And so, we have our registration site and we have just about 800 persons that have registered on the site between yesterday and today. I think most of them are going to be in London when we go to London.

**EHdK 43:54 And I would imagine that people here might talk to family members and say it went really well. So, the numbers will build. So, Monday and Tuesday you're in Birmingham and then Thursday, Friday and Saturday you'll be in London. So yeah, that's a considerable amount of people already.**

AW 44:11 The important thing is that they're very appreciative of it.

**EHdK 44:16 Yeah. And how many people have you not registered? Have people come and they've found out they need additional documentation?**

AW 44:21 I don't have an exact percentage but right now we have 800 people registered and we will probably see another 800 who haven't registered to come. So, you might end up with around 1200 persons being processed which is good. But what we have already been hearing is...so when are you coming back?

**EHdK 44:43 And how many minors have you had? How many young people?**

AW 44:47 I'd say quite a bit from the last...a lot of persons have brought their children here.

**EHdK 44:54 Have you found families come together?**

AW 44:56 Families. In fact, we had three families yesterday who came. But one of the things I have found and I'm not sure how this is managed...trying to get the information into the diaspora. I think that has been our biggest challenge.

**EHdK 45:14 And that was the question, essentially, that I had for you about communications. How much have you been in contact with...well, I presume you've been in regular contact with your PICA representative at the Jamaican High Commission but what strategy, what plan has been behind getting the message out?**

AW 45:29 Well we've gotten it on social media. Facebook, FaceTime, Twitter, Instagram and gotten it out there. We have done short interviews on BBC Midlands and we tried to get the information out there.

**EHdK 45:48 Was that on the radio or the television?**

AW 45:51 I am not sure. They called me on FaceTime... I thought I didn't want to read the interviews. One of the things that in America and Canada, it was very clear where were the Caribbean radio stations. We weren't as familiar with them here. Because, I think, that is something that... why we're even doing this Access Jamaica because, for example, here in Birmingham, it is since arriving and talking to the people. They say, so you need to speak to this radio station and this radio station. You find that at the High Commission...but learning how the churches play a very important role.

**EHdK 46:44 So as we know, George Ramocan, who I also interviewed for the oral history interviews, he's a preacher. So, he was a High Commissioner but also a preacher. That was an interesting story.**

AW 46:56 Very big. And we have found that getting the information into the churches. That is what has gotten it out into the diaspora in the UK.

**EHdK 47:06** I also think though that people who've had a positive experience with PICA will also...that's something they're going to tell their friends and their neighbours and their families about it. It's kind of going to have this snowball momentum to it. How did this come about then? Why did you prioritise the need to start...not for people to come to PICA but for PICA to come to the people?

AW 47:39 PICA as agency, one of our requirements is that we earn our own revenue, so we need to earn revenue. So, it's important to look at the marketplace and our marketplace is in the Jamaican diaspora.

**EHdK 47:55** You say that but the prices are relatively cheap. Could you talk us through the prices?

AW 48:00 Well, the prices are set by the government.

**EHdK 48:02** Yes, but they're not they're not high, are they? How much was it for a Jamaican passport?

AW 48:07 The charge, you know, is 110 to do your renewal and that costs into the courier price and sending it back to you.

**EHdK 48:17** So, when you compare that with the prices of getting British documentation. A British passport...I can't tell you off the top of my head but it's a lot more than 110 [a standard British passport renewal is not expensive but the fee to naturalise as a British citizen is £1,5000]. Also, there's a backlog at the Home Office at the moment so there are Brits who are not getting their passports quickly or efficiently. Also, the Home Office has introduced a rule that says if you have dual nationality that you have to submit your British passport and your original passport as well which means that people who are trying to renew their passports have no documentation. There's a lot of these...What I find fascinating about our conversation today is seeing the discrepancies really in the different services that are being offered.

AW 49:09 It is interesting. My God, that is something that clearly we need to follow up on. And because if you have your dual nationality, it's important that you have a proper travel document or passport to support.

**EHdK 49:21** Remember that people in the UK, Jamaicans in the UK, or people of Jamaican descent in the UK, were being asked to regularise their status. A lot of people who were caught up in the Windrush scandal found themselves without the documentation or found themselves challenged by the Home Office. And the regularisation costs have skyrocketed, are in the thousands. So, it's not just for



**somebody to regularise as a British citizen but also to register their children. So, I think it's very interesting to see the huge differences between the prices basically.**

AW 50:03 And once you have regularised your status and your children's status you would get the Jamaican documentation that is what would help, you know, on the British side.

**EHdK 50:18 Well, I spoke in an oral history interview to Jennifer Housen who was extremely knowledgeable on this subject because she's an expert in immigration and citizenship law. So, she's far more articulate than I would be to talk through this process. But it's very interesting, I think, to think about some of the issues that people who are living...who are essentially transnational people to living this existence between the UK and Jamaica and thinking about how these things connect as well in terms of...**

AW 50:53 Well I think, in fact, one other challenge we have had with the British birth certificate is anyone who wants to amend that record, they might say, "No, man, it was not Andrew, it was André." But on that national document, it says Andrew. Spelling mistakes and they said, when you take it back, it's like getting the document corrected. Easier to knock down a building, you know, so you wonder why...

**EHdK 51:32 I wanted to ask you about the Windrush scandal itself. Was that something that you heard about in Jamaica? Was it something that was talked about in the meetings that PICA had with the British High Commission? Was it seen as being connected to the work of PICA?**

AW 51:57 The Windrush scandal when it emerged...I think around 2018 when it emerged...it did not come directly to PICA at first because it was viewed...this was really the Jamaicans who migrated to the UK who had been landed and it was their immigration status in the UK which was mostly affected. As I indicated earlier, how PICA became involved is that for those who didn't have any documentation and needed now to get their Jamaican passport and formalise, then we were brought into that process to help with that regularisation process because of how some of these persons came from the Windrush generation to the UK. Now, subsequent to that, we helped the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Most of it was managed through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs who would send requests to us.

**EHdK 53:08 And what specifically were the requests?**

AW 53:12 The requests were to verify the person's identity. Check if any persons came from the UK. Have they now returned to Jamaica? Were there any persons who are in the Windrush who were deported to Jamaica? So, we now had to do our checks to support now the government's position on these persons who are being impacted. I mean, we heard a lot about it. We heard that because these Jamaicans who were on the Windrush and they

didn't have any status so that certainly affected the status of their children and their grandchildren in the UK. So, anything we could do to verify the identity of the Jamaicans and ensure that, yes. I mean, we wouldn't have any records from 1948 or 1945 because at the time Jamaica was a British colony. But certainly by 2018, anybody who travelled to Jamaica...we would have started to have some kind of information on these persons. So at least we could say, yes, these persons did come back to Jamaica. These persons have returned. And we could check our passport issue system to say, yes, these persons own Jamaican passports. So it was really from that perspective that we participated in the whole Windrush issue and how we could help to...help Jamaicans and one of them from that generation that needed to get their...sort of regularise because some of them for years, decades, didn't have a passport, you know. Our ability to give them a Jamaican passport after all this time was good.

**EHdK 55:12 You said the reactions of people who have attended...**

AW 55:17 ...Have just been awesome. Persons are really happy. They're really thankful for the service. And they've asked us to come back again. And I think we are helping to close. In fact, I mentioned something earlier but if at the Home Office, to get their British passport is a challenge. So, persons don't like to be without a passport so knowing that you can get another passport. I guess, it meant a lot for them.

**EHdK 55:49 Is there anything that has happened in the UK that has had had a negative impact on people that you've seen in your line of work?**

AW 56:01 I think a lot of them are probably concerned about the whole Brexit and the uncertain future of certain aspects of the country. I think that is what has impacted some of them. A lot of them have said that they are interested in investing back in Jamaica because, you know, they can earn money through investment, rent houses, or do anything. But quite a lot of them have said, "Look, we need to get our house in order to come home." So, you know, those are all the things that people need help with.

**EHdK 56:42 As we are wrapping up the interview, is there anything else that you would like to say?**

AW 56:47 Well, you know, speaking to you, I'll be very frank, has really brought this whole Windrush thing into sharp perspective for me. I know we didn't contribute as directly but clearly the impact of it is far-reaching and maybe even some of what we're seeing out there is as a result of this. I didn't see the connection before, but it probably drives now persons in their minds, "I need to establish some kind of safety net. And the best way to have my safety net is to get back my Jamaican passport, get back my Jamaican identity. These people are here to do this for me. Let me get on board."

**EHdK 57:35 Have some people been hesitant about it?**

AW 57:37 Well, we have heard that a few have been hesitant, but you'll see them coming out and saying look, we need to get back our Jamaican identity for whatever reason. They just want to know about the Jamaican passport. And maybe this is some of the things that are driving it. We're here to assist and what I will also say, it helps many of you because even if the Home Office...you have your passport, you have your British...you have your proper documentation. So, if you want residency or something, at least you have a proper document to show the authorities. So, you can regularise your status in the UK and that is important.

**EHdK 58:26 And how do you think the efficiency of the system has improved on in recent years?**

AW 58:32 For us? Significantly. In fact, within 25 working days a person will get back their passport.

**EHdK 58:41 Quicker than in the UK!**

AW 58:43 [laughs]. I am very happy for that, though! I mean, people have told me that the UK is taking six months. We are doing it much quicker than that!

**EHdK 58:50 Right. Fantastic. Thank you. I really enjoyed our talk today.**

AW 58:54 Yes, I did as well. And, you know, I'm certainly going to look forward to your books and reading about this whole thing. I'm a history buff so knowing this history...it is a critical part of our history. And it is not something that we need to forget about. It is something that we need to learn from.

**EHdK 59:15 Thank you so much.**

AW 59:17 It was my pleasure.

[END OF AUDIOFILE].