



GUY HEWITT INTERVIEW

Key:

EHdK: Dr Eve Hayes de Kalaf (Interviewer)

GH: Reverend Guy Hewitt (Respondent)

Date/Location:

1st July 2022. Senate House, London, United Kingdom.

EHdK 00:03 I'm here with Guy Hewitt who was the High Commissioner to Barbados in London from 2014 until 2018. First and foremost, thank you so much for agreeing to this interview today.

GH 00:15 Delighted to be here.

EHdK 00:18 Firstly, we would like to ask you if you could talk a little bit about how you came to be working in your post as High Commissioner in London. What brought you here?

GH 00:29 So, just to give some context. I came into this post with a very eclectic background which involved being attached to the University of the West Indies, the Caribbean community, civil society and a regional NGO. It's a broad and varied experience base. I worked as well at the Commonwealth Secretariat. But I think what I found myself doing is being able to draw on quite a few of those skills once I had been here. But I am a non-career diplomat and it was an honour for me and highly unexpected when the government of Barbados asked me to take up this assignment. But I was determined once offered it that I would do it to the best of my ability.

EHdK 01:20 Fantastic. I really enjoyed reading your article 'The Windrush Scandal: An Insider's Reflection'. In this article you talk about the concept of "guerilla diplomacy". How did this concept influence you and what impact did it have on your day-to-day work as a High Commissioner?

GH 01:43 For a lot of people, the diplomatic field is largely unknown and nebulous. It seems to be a lot of people sitting in behind closed doors working out deals for the benefit of their respective countries. And generally traditional diplomacy has been that. When you go abroad as a diplomat, your role is to represent your country. You carry the same protocols and the same status as a Head of State. And therefore, it is a major responsibility. And because of that a lot of people, especially the non-career diplomats, can be intimidated by their role. For me, returning to the country of my birth, which is the United Kingdom, returning to a place that I had studied and worked in, meant that there was a familiarity. And because there are some ancestral connections meant that I approached this with a certain level of confidence but also with a commitment to add value because I didn't want to be, as

some people or many taxpayers feel, these are just people who go on an overseas jaunt, live the good life and then return home. I really wanted to add value. So, I made sure that I immersed myself in the understanding of what diplomacy was all about and trying to find ways of making a difference and adding value to make the taxpayers feel, at least when it came to me, that it was money well spent.

EHdK 03:26 Thank you. And can you tell us a little bit about Barbados? Where it's situated, its population?

GH 03:33 Barbados is the most easterly of all the Caribbean islands. It is a small island: 166 square miles. It has a population of just under a third of a million people. But one country that was known for some significant things. The modern plantation industry that has developed and was exported around the Commonwealth was developed in Barbados by James Drax and that meant that Barbados became at the time one of the most valuable colonies in the Empire. We found ourselves privileged historically, and I should say that would have been the citizens because sugar came at a costly expense of slavery and the enslaved Africans who were kidnapped to support this plantation economy. But it meant that historically you have a country that was a settlement colony. That a lot of people came from the UK to make their wealth and just to understand the significance of Barbados in the 17th century. There were at the end of the 17th century about 200,000 inhabitants in the Americas. At that time, the American colonies. We had nearly 50,000 in Barbados because that was the significance and the concentration of people who came to try to make it good through this new sugar economy. Over time, the country has grown, developed. It came out of just sugar cultivation in the 1970s and got heavily involved in tourism. Many people know Barbados as a place where they go on vacations. Where a lot of the kind of rich and famous have historically gone to as their choice destination. It is a country that has produced for the Caribbean some of the best cricketers. Garry Sobers [Garfield Sobers], who is renowned to be the greatest cricketer there's ever been, is a product of Barbados. For a younger generation, there is Rihanna who everybody knows is this, um, singing sensation. And I would say also now a business tycoon because she's made so much through her clothing and makeup. She too is from Barbados. And so their, there has been those strong historic links between the two.

EHdK 06:19 What specifically would you say is the United Kingdom's interests in Barbados?

G: 06:27 I would say politically Barbados has always been a very supportive, a very Conservative society. It is reputed that when Britain declared war against Germany, the first telegram that it received was a message from the premier in Barbados saying, "Go ahead, Britain. Barbados is behind you". So that is a joke made about Barbadians, many from our brothers and sisters within the Caribbean. But I think it suggests an affinity that has always been had. And that in part is because the majority of our leaders, our prime ministers, were Oxford, Cambridge and LSE-trained. So, they had this strong sense of the mother country.

That has now evolved. I think that Britain was able to count on Barbados' support politically or in international relations. But most of that has now transformed to its work in tourism. Because Barbados is the only country in the Caribbean where UK visitors are the primary source market. So, we still have that strong connection with actually two flights every day going into Barbados from the UK. And at the height of our winter season sometimes you will have 10 aircrafts full of Brits who are coming to Barbados to enjoy the sun, the sea and the sand.

EHd: 08:02 Thank you. What was the hostile environment?

GH 08:07 In 2014, the United Kingdom sought to enact policies to try to address what they thought was the influx of illegal immigrants primarily coming in from Europe. And so, what it sought to do was to penalise British citizens, employers, landlords, people working in government, who were thought to be giving access to benefits and rights of people who didn't belong here. And with the expectation that if you made it hard for EU immigrants to get benefits in the country, it would lessen their desire to migrate or to enter illegally in the first place. Unfortunately, a lot of West Indian-born long-term residents in the United Kingdom who I daresay would, I argue, were citizens of the United Kingdom, got caught up in this.

EHdK 09:14 And when did you begin to realise that the hostile environment policy was having an impact on West Indian communities?

GH: 09:26 We were getting anecdotal information shortly after I got here. The Caribbean High Commissioners, the diplomatic representatives of the CARICOM countries, we meet as a Caucus on a monthly basis. And the High Commissioner for Saint Kitts and Nevis [Kevin Isaac] raised this initially as a concern, something he was hearing. We got word of this as well. And when we did raise it in the first instance with the UK Government in a bilateral meeting with the then Foreign Secretary Philip Hammond, we were assured that this was an anomaly. That there was no such policy of systematic persecution. And that all was really well. Unfortunately, and naïvely, we took the UK government at its word and we did not proceed on that or to do anything more about it until we started to track the information that was coming out of The Guardian newspaper. And here, I must always commend Amelia Gentleman for her outstanding reporting. The information from The Guardian that spoke to the plight of persons from the Caribbean. The majority of them being Jamaicans because Jamaica is half of the population of the Caribbean community, of the Commonwealth Caribbean. So as a consequence, even in migration patterns, they tend to be that much more voluminous. But we were also getting reports directly to the Barbados High Commission from people born in the UK...sorry, born in Barbados, that they were having similar problems.

EHdK 11:17 When did you receive the response that these problems arising from this issue were an anomaly? And that they were a mistake? What conversations

happened around that? And did...is that what you really believed at the time? Or did your thinking around it change as this progressed?

GH 11:46 Obviously, over time, the penny dropped, and we realised that we were getting half-truths from the UK government. That what they were trying to do was to placate us to assure us and to mislead us into believing that there was not a problem when one really did exist. And as I started following the lead from The Guardian reporters speaking to people who had been affected by this, I realised that this was not an anomaly. But there was actually a plan and a programme in place to persecute, to arrest, deny benefits, deport where possible, West Indians back to a country that they may have been born in but one that they had no sense of affinity with, no practical connection with. And to make them, in a sense, or reject them from the country that, as I've said, invited them or their parents in the first instance to come and make a contribution and to help rebuild postwar Britain.

EHdK 13:03 Talk to me about the coalition of the willing. How did this form? And what impact were you hoping to have?

GH 13:14 I realised that traditional diplomacy was going to fail us. We had the High Commissioners from the Caribbean, from CARICOM [The Caribbean Community], met frequently with representatives from the Foreign Office. And every time we met with them and we raised this, we kept getting the same assurance that this was just an anomaly. They're looking into it. And it really was, in a sense, a stalling tactic. And I presume they would have figured that, believed that, after a while we would have given up. The more I got into it, the more I realised there was a problem. And the more I realised that there was not going to be a solution that was forthcoming going through diplomatic channels. In trying to prepare myself for this assignment, when I got it in 2014 I tried to read as widely as I could about different approaches to doing diplomacy. I came across a work by Darrell Copeland on guerrilla diplomacy where, in a sense, it's on the other end of the spectrum of what traditional diplomacy is which is going to meetings, writing letters, having cordial conversations. And what he was talking about was the reality of a diplomat to be able to network within the locality that he is located both to get an understanding of what is going on but also to find persons who he could work with who are going to help him advance the agenda of his country. Because, ultimately, this is what diplomacy is about. It is about two different countries coming together and trying to work out what is the optimum solution. So, when you find yourself in a situation where the other country is not willing to negotiate or even concede that there is a problem, you have to find creative means. So, what I started to do was to engage other stakeholders in the media. Those who worked in in civil society, who worked with migration issues, issues of race and ethnicity. Persons, Members of Parliament, not just those politically aligned. But in the UK, you have crossbenchers which are members of the Upper House who are independent with no party affiliation. And to seek guidance. And again, I want to put on record the outstanding guidance and wisdom that was received from Herman, Lord Ouseley, who is the former Chief Executive and Chairman of the Racial Equalities Commission [Commission for Racial Equality] in the UK. [He]

understood the dynamics of race and racism, the way in which the system often chose to try to bury it, tried to pretend it didn't exist. And he helped me come up with a strategy that would allow me to influence the government's decision-making by taking the plight of those people I represent from Barbados to Britain and making the case not just through typical diplomatic channels but also using as many different levers as possible.

EHdK 16:57 Essentially, you began to form strategic alliances with different community groups and activists and people of influence. Politicians, community leaders, among others. Why was that so important to you? And what impact do you think that had?

GH 17:21 One of the unusual features of my assignment was that I was Barbados' first London born High Commissioner and I daresay possibly might have been the very first from the Caribbean in many countries to actually be born in the country that they're asking to go and serve in. It was not a conflict of interest because I always believed that Barbados, and at the time the UK, sharing the same Head of State meant ultimately that the Queen was the boss of all of us. And it felt to me more coming to work with and work amongst cousins to try to get things done. But there came a point when, as I mentioned earlier, that I took this situation very personally. Being London born, as they say in the Caribbean with my navel string buried in this country, it means that there is a historic and a semblance of ancestry here in this country. And I could not believe that the UK, which had invited West Indians particularly to come in the post-war era to help rebuild this country, to deal with the shortages of labour, help build the transportation system, the National Health Service...that a country could be so disrespectful. Disgraceful that they would want to turn on them and tell them that this country that you have lived in for generations. The way you have worked, paid taxes, your children have been born...no longer wants you and you should go back to where you came from. It was something that I knew I could not be party to and I had to get involved to make sure that something was done. So, what I sought to do was to reach out to as many different stakeholders as I could identify in the country. I reached out to the media. I went beyond The Guardian and tried to build alliances, especially on television, recognising that more people get their information from television news channels than necessarily print media. I reached out again to the Caribbean diaspora. I found a list of students, university students, who were from Caribbean student associations across all the universities. And I got in contact with them directly making them aware of this. I appealed to stakeholders in Europe because I felt this was a human rights issue. And I went to the Council of Europe, to their Human Rights Commissioner [Commissioner for Human Rights] to make a claim on this. And that is an important point we must come back to. I went to the Church. I was aware that Theresa May's father was a man of faith. I also know that for many Caribbeans the thing that has, that kept us especially through the barbarity and inhumanity of slavery were people holding on to their faith and belief that God would deliver them. And I went to the Church and I sought their support. I went as many places as I could. I went to my fellow High Commissioners to speak to them. I wrote to all of the committees and interest groups in parliament that have an interest and whether it was Foreign Affairs, or Home

Affairs, or the Caribbean, or the Commonwealth, or immigration or race, I tried to get everybody's attention. And I would say, thankfully, that I firmly believe this that the hand of Providence helped the struggle move forward. And it brought us to where we didn't expect ourselves to be in a very short, a relatively short period of time, which was to get an admission of guilt, in a sense, from the UK Government, that there was wrongdoing. An apology and a commitment to try to resolve this atrocious and hostile act towards West Indian born persons who didn't deserve anything they had.

EHdK 22:07 Thank you. Going back to your time working as High Commissioner. Did you yourself have any personal interactions with people who were directly affected by the scandal? Did people come and talk to you?

GH 22:20 Yes. Some came. The Barbadians, some of them came to the High Commission to seek support. I tried to reach out to anyone else that I could find and I took it, as I said, as my representational role in a similar way when there was the Grenfell disaster in London. When that high rise caught fire, again I felt it was my duty to find persons who could have been affected and to let them know that the High Commission was there. And this was important for two reasons. One, a lot of people have not historically been able to count on or know who their representatives abroad are. And so, I made it part of my practice to let anybody know. I tried to get information on all Barbadian students studying in the UK to let them know that the mission was there. And so I sought to find out not just for Barbadians but for West Indians who were suffering to really get a sense of what was happening and to hear their stories to encounter situations where people who were...who had life threatening illnesses were being denied medical attention simply because the government was trying to make a political point was to me beyond belief and an indictment on this country that suggested it had written, or purported to write, the rules of fair play. But in Windrush, I saw a government break them all.

EHdK 24:09 Can you remember any specific personal stories that people came to for anything that arose?

GH 24:18 No, the point was that a lot of people came here and the evidence and the documentation says it. They came here as Citizens of the United Kingdom and Colonies [CUKC]. They came, they didn't have to go through any process of naturalisation. They came, they started work, some went and trained, some brought their children. They went to school, they paid their taxes, they got old, they retired, they bought homes, they contributed to their community. They helped create modern Britain and so they never thought for a minute that they were anything other than British. And this, to me, is the grave injustice of this all. That the government, rather than treating these people as an anomalous situation...that they had fallen down. They had erred. And when I say they had erred, I maintain that persons who came from the Caribbean to the UK prior to independence, it was a process of internal migration no different to the movement of people from Ireland or Wales or Scotland or England. And they should have been recognised as that and treated

accordingly. Whatever mistakes were made by the UK Government when migrants came here - and I would never for a minute think it was anything other than intentional - what you saw were people who lived a lifetime in the UK, made an outstanding contribution, paying the price of the UK government's incompetence and failings.

EHdK 25:59 Could you perhaps talk us through then what happened with the Commonwealth Immigrants Act in 1962 as well as the ensuing Immigration Act of 1971? Why were these two dates so important for this community?

GH 26:12 What had happened was - and if you contextualise it - coming out of the Second World War, Britain was in a major crisis in terms of workers. They did not have enough workers to work in the hospitals, work on the roads, work in factories. They needed labour. And in terms of proximity, the Caribbean in the sense had the greater proximity in terms of the historic connections you had across the Caribbean. Everyone who was speaking English as their first language. So, it meant that they could come to the UK able to read and able to write and work in English very easily because of the legacy of colonisation. And I say to people you need to understand that the Caribbean or the Commonwealth Caribbean was a colonial construct. The indigenous people were decimated early on and all who were there, whether of African, European or Asian descent, were there as a consequence of colonisation. So, they knew that people only understood the mother country. Later, we got a better appreciation of the motherland. But they came here, and West Indians came to the UK, thinking that they were returning home. And just to give you the significance, when they asked the West Indians to come to the UK, 15% of the Caribbean population migrated. It was significant and it made a huge difference to this country, to its economy.

EHdK 28:10 I asked about the two dates, right, because what happened?

GH 28:13 As you can imagine, colonialism was never benevolent, was never cordial. After a while...I shouldn't say after a while because before that, there were problems after the First World War with West Indians especially as a seaman at the ports, getting beaten up, being subjected to racial attacks, to race hatred. After, in the Second World War, there were West Indian soldiers [who] mutinied because of how they were being treated while fighting for King and country. So, there was an awareness of racism. But once you had a number of people coming to the UK, there was the presumption that when West Indians came here they were going to come to provide a service. And I think, ultimately, they presumed because of the weather, West Indians would not have stayed. What they didn't appreciate was our resolve, as I say, that sense of belonging to the mother country because our education was a British education that a lot of people came with a certain degree of affinity with the things here. The Church of England in many countries was very prevalent. So, they came here believing that this could be somewhere that they could stay longer than they originally anticipated. And once they had children, once they got settled, once they leave their roots, they kind of lost that sense of returning home and this is where the legislation was being brought in. Because, as I said, initially as West Indians were citizens of the UK,

there was the right to reside in the United Kingdom. And what we saw was the legislation, different pieces of legislation, being enacted. And I need to make this point...by the two major political parties, both Conservative and Labour, to try to keep West Indians out of the country because they felt that it was going to make...was a problem primarily with their domestic voting base of the white British voter. And this is what West Indians came to this notion of no Blacks, the signs in the houses: "No Irish, no blacks, no dogs" and they persevered. But they wanted the work. They had to fight against discrimination that came out then and then continued until the hostile environment.

EHdK 31:00 What role do you think Brexit played in the Windrush scandal? Why do you think the 2016 referendum was important in terms of what was happening politically in the game?

GH 31:14 Well, in a sense there may have been, I think, a positive. When Britain saw itself leaving the European Union, there was this presumptiveness that the Commonwealth, which was historically the biggest trading partner, where the UK would have filled that void. What they failed to appreciate was that since 1973, when Britain entered the European community and ended Commonwealth preferences, which is meant that before that time before 1973 Commonwealth countries had a strategic advantage, a trade advantage trading with Britain. When Britain entered the European community, that ended and a lot of countries, including the ones like Australia, New Zealand, found themselves in an economic crisis. And since then, these countries went on to build new trading relationships. Australia became more in tune with Asia, found itself having to work closely with the Pacific, then with the UK, as did New Zealand. The Caribbean started to have stronger bilateral relationships with Canada and, subsequent to that, with the United States. So, the world had changed. So, this notion, which some described as Empire 2.0, that post-Brexit the UK was going to just say, everyone come back home and let's be a happy family again, did not work in terms of trade relationships. But this is what we saw also, the impact of Brexit was we were able to use the status of European citizens in the UK as a trigger because the European Parliament raised a serious concern with the UK in its Brexit negotiations which the UK government wanted to conclude that it was looking on the Windrush scandal and asking if the UK was willing to treat people that it had a much longer historical relationship with in this abominable way, what was going to happen to the European citizens? And that was an important political trigger for those of us working on Windrush because it meant that we were not just... Windrush was no longer a parochial issue of West Indians in the UK but it became linked to the bigger political issue within the UK of Brexit.

EHdK 34:02 Thank you. And that was a specific strategy then that you used...

GH 34:06 I mean, that was one of the things that we sought to do initially. I can't take credit for it happening in the way it did. But it happened. We saw that and getting it, we saw the difference that we anticipated it would make in terms of getting the UK government's

attention. Because, as I said, this was no longer about West Indian migrants, but this was about the successful conclusion of the Brexit agreement.

EHdK 34:37 Great and what was happening in Barbados at that time? What conversations were you having in the Caribbean? Did you talk to other colleagues or to other High Commissioners about what was happening in the UK?

GH 34:50 One of the challenges we faced, and one of the unique things about the Windrush scandal, was the way in which the High Commissioners from the Caribbean based in London really had to work autonomously. Because the migration from the Caribbean...sorry, the migration of West Indians to the UK, happened so long ago, we are talking about in the 1950s, 1960s. And largely the 1970s. A situation that was evolving, sometimes 50 years later, was not one that was resonating with Caribbean governments. These persons were...while we do have returning nationals, and they're, they're welcome. These people were not in direct contact. The trading relationships with the UK were not that significant. The governments in capital were not paying that much attention to what was going on. We did our best. We sought, I remember in 2018, at the Intersessional Meeting of the CARICOM Heads of Governments, we tried to get the foreign ministers to take up this issue. But it was never discussed. We understood they did not understand that there was this crisis that required intervention from capital. So, ultimately, the High Commissioners here found themselves really taking on what is the powers that we have of being the country abroad and acting in what we thought was the best interest. Both of the people from the Caribbean in Britain but also on behalf of our countries.

EHdK 36:52 Can you recall the timeline then in the lead-up to CHOGM [Commonwealth Heads of Government] meeting, the Commonwealth Summit meeting that took place on the 19th and 20th of April 2018? What was the build up to that? What was your role, basically, in exposing the scandal and trying to gain support to protest?

GH 37:19 For the benefit of the listeners, the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting [CHOGM], this leader summit that took place in April 2018 in London, was the biggest international summit that the UK had ever convened. And because it was being done post-Brexit, it was one that the government was really putting a lot of political, economic and PR emphasis on. We knew from the previous meeting that had taken...a previous meeting that had taken place in Sri Lanka. That when we were fighting with the UK Government on what we thought was a discriminatory air passenger duty which meant that persons travelling to the Caribbean from the UK were forced to pay more taxes than if they were travelling from the UK to Los Angeles or to Hawaii simply because the capital was closer, was really working against our tourism industry. And for Barbados, as I said earlier, where our primary source market is the UK, this was something we were seriously concerned about. And the matter only got...Barbados took the lead in 2013 in trying to get the UK's attention and to resolve it. And it only got resolved when there was a threat at the

Heads of Government meeting in Colombo in Sri Lanka in 2013. To just put it all on the table and have an open and raging debate about the injustice. At that point, the UK government was willing to come to the table and thankfully saw reason and they made the necessary changes to the air passenger duty. That lesson was instructive. We knew, as I said earlier, that the UK had put a lot of emphasis on having this Commonwealth summit in London. And we knew there was a window of opportunity for us to use that to really mobilise support politically, nationally and internationally for the situation for the plight of these Windrush victims. And so, we tried. And let me say this, we tried to use all of the traditional diplomatic channels. We sought to engage the Foreign Office, we wrote copious amounts of letters, we tried to do all the things that diplomats normally do to resolve difficulties with their bilateral partners. But it all came to nought. And so, what was needed was to find a trigger mechanism that would bring this to light. So, a small group of us...

EHdK 40:30 Can you remember who was part of that group?

GH 40:32 We got...I had a few, a few key High Commissioners. But I must say that all of the High Commissioners from the Caribbean came on board. We had journalists and people in the media, members of civil society and those who had been victims themselves. We decided we were going to plan and execute a media campaign seven days before the summit took place.

EHdK 41:05 As I remember it, I think it was the 30th of March, the end of March, there was a Guardian article about a gentleman who had moved to Antigua from the UK. And he'd lived and worked in the UK. So, he was liable to detention and classified as a person without leave and then asked to report to the Home Office once a fortnight. And I know that you work very closely with Amelia Gentleman then to make this issue front page news. So, what was happening around the time of the 12th of April, the Windrush press briefing, what happened then?

GH 41:40 What had happened up to that point was [that] we knew, as I said, The Guardian was seeking to do...wrote this narrative and was writing on it for months and not really making headway. So, we planned this media briefing where we brought all of the key stakeholders together. We got involved, and I remember we got a letter of support from Wilfred Wood who was the first Black Bishop in the Church of England, who wrote a very stern letter...open letter about this inhumane treatment. We got again Lord Ouseley, as I said, who was one of the leading actors working [on] race equality in the UK. We got him involved. We got many of the NGOs involved who were working on this. We got persons who had been affected by this. And we brought the media together for this briefing. What was significant and what, I think, really turned that event on its head was the fact that we asked the victims to tell their story. And that was very powerful. And these were not people whom the press or the government might have tried to suggest were criminals or illegals or anyone other than the people that everybody, mainstream Brits, white English knew, they went to school with, worked alongside and met in the pub and had a drink with. And they

told their story. But what was important was they were not just telling their story to The Guardian but they were telling their story to all of the channels and reporters from a lot of the media houses. They, coincidentally, because I was coordinating for the Caribbean on this issue discussions with the United Kingdom. Coincidentally, one of the media houses found out that there was a meeting that we had sought with the Prime Minister, UK Prime Minister at the time, Theresa May, to meet with Caribbean Heads to resolve this in the interest of justice. In the interest of the Commonwealth. In the interest of doing the right thing. They caught wind of the fact that she had said she was not available to meet with the CARICOM heads. And that was a major...that brought about from the media, and I think mainstream society, the outrage that these hardworking, conscientious British people who had done everything and been a part of this society could be treated so horribly. And the government was showing its indifference towards them and was not even willing to meet with Caribbean leaders to try to resolve it. And that, I think, was important. What I had sought to do, again, in my role of trying to coordinate this was that I used the opportunities to engage the media myself directly in the lead up to that so that people had a sense, and I was willing to speak, frankly, and extensively on the situation, so that people in the country were trained to realise that what the government was trying to either pass off as an anomaly, or that these people who didn't belong here, was really just a cover up of a major humanitarian catastrophe. And the kind of indifference of the government towards the treatment of minorities, specifically, primarily Black West Indians, who had given their all. And it brought about a media furore.

EHdK 45:52 What happened at the meeting of the High Commissioners with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office? Because I know that you played a very active role in that. And I'm just thinking about, what can you remember about...well, you've talked to us already about the events leading up to that meeting...but what actually happened on that day? Who was sat at the table and what reaction were you met with?

GH 46:15 After that time, as I said, initially we had raised these queries with the Foreign Office. We raised it with the then Foreign Secretary. We kept getting the assurance that things were not as they seemed. And up to that time, I think it was up to the meeting we had with the Foreign Office in March that included representatives from the Home Office, they kept trying to sell this story that this was an anomaly. That they were digging into it but that there was nothing untoward, nothing sinister, nothing systematic...or systemic going on within the operations of government. And we knew that that was not the case. By this time, there was enough anecdotal information, enough stories. And we knew what we had to do was to expose it for what it was which was the government's indifference, or some would say, its outright...its perpetuation of an agenda that was never in the interest of migrants or minorities in this country. And that is what was exposed. What was wonderful again was that we, the members of our diaspora, got involved because most of the High Commissions have a network of organisations that try to do outreach to its members across the country. I had been actively engaging our diaspora on other issues but I encouraged

them to get involved in their local radio and members of our diaspora got onto the regional radio stations, television stations, started to tell their story. And that is what really made it powerful. But what we also saw was other community activists getting involved. There was a parliamentary petition. I daresay if you check the data, it was one of the fastest parliamentary petitions to get the requisite signatures required for debate in parliament. And that was a reflection of the fact that it was not just the Barbadian community but I will say mainstream Brits who recognise that the treatment of West Indian born people in this country by the government of the day was abhorrent and deplorable.

EHdK 48:46 I know that students' associations played a role. You've already spoken about the role of faith-based organisations. I think some of the groups we could name as well who you were actively working with were the Runnymede Trust.

GH 49:00 The Runnymede Trust, The Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants, Praxis. There were a number of civil society agencies that did very good work and I'm glad that they were recognised as Amelia and The Guardian for the important role they played in trying to bring resolution to the situation and get justice for these people.

EHdK 49:27 And what role did Patrick Vernon play in terms of putting together the petition that led to the Westminster Hall debate?

GH 49:39 Patrick Vernon has been an important part of the Caribbean diaspora community in trying to highlight and educate people on the role that West Indians have made in Britain. He had done some work on the 100 Greatest Black Britons and did it to compile the narrative of these people who had made a contribution to help not just the Caribbean community but the wider British community appreciate all of what was given to them. My people came. He put together this parliamentary petition which sought an amnesty for people who had...[coughs]...sought an amnesty....[pause]. So, Patrick, as I said, was...has been an advocate for the Caribbean diaspora for a long time. And what he brought was a parliamentary petition which in the UK, as part of its...of the Westminster system is once the public comes out and demands debates on certain matters, it must be debated by parliament. And it was the way of opportunity for, in a sense, civic activism for the people to get their needs and their concerns heard. And we had learned that there was potentially - from the Migration Observatory at Oxford - about over 50,000 people who could have been caught up with and affected by this hostile environment. And Patrick was trying... brought a petition to create an amnesty that anyone and all persons who could have been affected would have been given the permission to stay and have their cases heard and have the matter resolved. Although we did not necessarily agree with the wording of the petition, it got unanimous support. And we all got our communities and sought to get them to sign up to support it. And as I said before, I think it was one of the fastest petitions to get the requisite number of signatures to lead a parliamentary debate. And that I think reflected how important this had become not just to Caribbean High Commissioners, the Caribbean community, but it had become a concern of people across the United Kingdom.

EHdK 52:22 Would you say you were the person who took the lead role in activism? Or do you think...I know it's a collective effort. But do you think there was anyone at the forefront who drew everything together?

GH: 52:36 I was privileged to have played a lead role in this. And I think this happened for a number of reasons. As I said earlier, I have a very eclectic background which starts with me being born in the UK which meant that I had a direct affinity with the people that were caught up in this. Because I came here as a High Commissioner not to just enjoy, as some call it, the trappings of office. But to do work. I made sure I got to know my community and travelled across the entire UK to get to know the Barbadians and other West Indians who had made the UK their home. And because of that, I felt connected with them, with the issue. Because I had a background in the NGO community that helped me understand the importance of activism, the importance...and some of the tools of how you try to move a government in a direction you might not necessarily want to go to. And as I said, because I wanted to learn how to be effective in this role. I understood the tools, the craft of diplomacy, and what I knew would and would not work. So, I felt, and I say to people and I've said to people in the past, I never understood why as a UK born at the time and unattached to any political party...I'm one of the youngest persons to be sent to London from Barbados...why I was given this opportunity. And I felt it was very providential. And when Windrush came about, I felt that I was put here not just to represent Barbados as a diplomat but to work towards the Windrush crisis. And because I had that sense that this was my purpose I did it to the best of my ability and with all of the passion and energy that I possibly could.

EHdK 54:53 Thank you and could you just maybe clarify for people listening what the function of a High Commissioner is? What does the High Commissioner do? A Caribbean High Commissioner in the UK?

GH 55:06 So the nomenclature, and it can sound very different because people don't understand it, a High Commissioner is an ambassador. But in the Commonwealth amongst the 54 members of the Commonwealth, which are 56 now that Gabon and Togo have joined...We call each other ambassadors. I'm sorry, High Commissioners. An ambassador is a foreign representative. High Commissioner means that we are part of a family, this Commonwealth family of nations. So as ambassadors, we represent our country's interests abroad at the highest possible level.

EHdK 55:48 And the Commonwealth Secretary General [Patricia Scotland]. What was her reaction as this was going on? Did she...was she outwardly supportive of these actions?

GH 56:01 I would say, in this campaign the role of the Commonwealth Secretariat or the Secretary General was one of the disappointments. Because we had written from the Caribbean, Commonwealth Caribbean countries, the High Commissions, to the Secretary

General, saying [that] with this Heads of Government meeting looming, we thought you had a vital role to play. Because it was...all the stakeholders involved were from the Commonwealth. And we felt that her role that is used to address tensions and disagreements amongst Commonwealth members could have been brought into play. I don't know if it was because she was focused on the Commonwealth Summit. But we only got at best an acknowledgement of our correspondence but there was no action taken by the Commonwealth Secretariat to get involved in order to work towards this resolution. And it was really important because of that, that we felt we had to go all in that we did it the way that we did.

EHdK 57:11 And did anybody else surprise you in the sense that perhaps certain players you expected them?

GH: 57:16 I want to say, and I have to say, that there...there were a number of parliamentarians who provided support. A lot of them from in the Labour Party. Yvette Cooper - I'm hoping I'm recalling these names right - who was the Chair of the Home Select Committee, she got actively involved. Keith Vaz who was in charge of the All-Party [Parliamentary] Group on Immigration, he was very supportive as was David Lammy who was Chair of the Parliamentary Group that dealt with issues of minority and ethnicity. And I think David Lammy. His speech, which went global, in turn of him talking about the National Day of Shame, was significant in terms of, again, focusing attention of the media, both locally and internationally, on the major feelings of the government when it came to this issue of the hostile environment.

EHdK 58:30 The role of...we talked earlier about this, I wanted to get some clarification for the interview... about the European Court [sic] of Human Rights, and why that was also relevant.

GH 58:40 One of the strategies that one learns when you are doing NGO mobilisation. One of the important things in NGO mobilisation is trying to identify who could be...who are your key stakeholders, who are those the key influencers. And we recognise that Europe, the UK because of Brexit, because of the negotiation, there was a potential trigger there. So what I sought to do was to engage the European Commission on Human Rights to make them aware of the situation and to seek their intervention. And there was an exchange of correspondence or communication where they assured us that they were aware of it. And they were monitoring the situation. And as I said earlier, it was that query coming out of the Europe that I think was possibly one of the more significant factors, in a sense, moving this issue at the rate at which it did.

EHdK 59:55 Thank you. I think I should have said European Commission of Human Rights. I apologise. What are your views of the Compensation Scheme? What involvement have you had after the scandal erupted? And is there anything you think the scheme should offer?

GH 1:00:17 And just to put in context. I left the United Kingdom and left this post about six months after the Windrush scandal. We had this launch and we had the discussion and accommodations by the UK government around the Commonwealth Summit. Those who worked on it. Who worked, did the report of the lessons learned and the adviser to the new Home Secretary I had a lot of respect for and I am thankful to them for the work they did. The Compensation Scheme in itself was, I think, generous, and it was designed and spoke about trying to provide compensation to those who had suffered in any way. But everything that I have read, heard and observed about how it has been managed and delivered is a complete and utter scandal. Um, I would say that it is to me, paradoxical and ironic that the current Home Secretary [Priti Patel] who is of from a migrant family, shows to me equal or greater contempt towards migrants and people of ethnic minority background than any of her Anglo-Saxon predecessors. It is a scandal. And I don't understand what part of her consciousness or absence of consciousness gives rise to this. But the UK Government has not stood behind anything that it offered or promised under the Windrush Compensation Scheme. And I am also, I must say, disappointed that my former fellow High Commissioners, that West Indian diaspora, or advocates on their part, have failed to make this a political issue because what the government did effectively was to suggest, as many governments do, we will throw money at a situation. And that makes everybody feel it has been resolved because we live in a very materialistic society. And people think once you've got money, you've got justice. Money does not compensate for the wrongdoings that went ahead and everything that we've seen out of the Windrush Compensation Scheme and further policies that the Home Secretary has sought in that suggests that this government is as hostile towards migrants and immigrants and people of colour as it was in the middle in the height of the scandal. And that I think will only come about when the people of the UK both the decent mainstream ones, and those who are of minority ethnic backgrounds, recognise they need to make their voices heard. They need to make themselves felt and that the government realises they cannot continue to treat people like if they are first- and second-class citizens. There are people who don't deserve the right to be considered British and English and have the full support of the law and all the systems of justice behind them.

EHdK 1:03:52 Thank you so much. I know that in your article, you...I'm jumping back in time a little bit... but following the scandal you talked about the former Immigration Minister Caroline Nokes who wrote a piece for the Voice newspaper. Do you want to say something about that being illustrative of the government's reaction?

GH 1:04:13 I mean, it was not. And it's important too. I know that Amber Rudd took the fall or fell on her sword for the Windrush scandal. But it's important to point out that the Home Secretary who enacted this became Prime Minister...that's Theresa May. And it showed the short sightedness and the kind of xenophobia emanated at the highest levels important to also document that the officials within the Home Office and report documentation showed that they did know it was going to have an adverse effect before they implemented it. And they still went ahead. So, persons like Caroline Nokes, who sought to go and reassure

people that all was well, was just trying to spread the narrative and the fiction that this government cared about people of colour minorities. And I had to counter that by telling people do not trust the government. Because on issues of immigrant rights, they were completely untrustworthy.

EHdK: 1:05:25 Now you're living in Barbados. What kind of responses or reactions have you been left with about the scandal? Is it something that is broadly talked about? Or are people familiar with it?

GH: 1:05:40 People have a sense of it but, as I said, the thing about - and if you understand all of the programming, television programming, news programming that comes into the Caribbean - 90% of it comes from the US, possibly 5% coming from the UK and Canada. So, things that happen to the Caribbean diaspora probably in North America, people are familiar with. The Windrush scandal, they had a sense of but they didn't understand the extent to which it affected people largely because - and this was something that we...I recognised when I tried to get information - people were embarrassed by this. People were embarrassed to say that they lost their job or their house or couldn't access their bank account. They were embarrassed because they couldn't believe that this country that they gave everything for would treat them in the way that that it did. It's the way in which you find victims of violence and abuse at home are not willing to speak about it. People weren't willing to speak about it. So, there are a lot of stories that have not yet been told simply because people are embarrassed to believe that the mother country that they gave everything for and believed everything of would treat them so deplorably.

EHdK: 1:07:10 Thank you. We're about to wrap up the interview now. Is there anything else that you would like to say? Anything additional you wanted to add about what we've spoken about today?

GH: 1:07:21 I want, in a sense, to stress, as I said, how we go forward. It's very telling that between...there was almost 100 years between emancipation and the 1937 riots and civil unrest in the Caribbean where the Black majority fought and demanded their rights. It was nearly 100 years in the US between emancipation, their slavery and the civil rights movements when the Black, the former enslaved fought for their rights. And I think that it's important for migrants in this country to realise that their rights are not going to be benevolently bestowed until West Indian Black and other minority ethnic groups organise themselves and seek the level of political, social, economic participation that they deserve. Then they will continue to be waiting in outer rooms. It will never be given to them. They need to organise, they need to mobilise, they need to articulate in order to get what they and their children and their children's children have every right to because they are now part of this country and, as somebody once wrote, there IS Black in the Union Jack. Thank you.

EHdK: 1:08:55 Thank you so much. [END OF AUDIOFILE].