



RICHARD BLACK INTERVIEW

Key:

EHdK: Eve Hayes de Kalaf (Interviewer)

RB: Richard Black (Respondent)

Date/Location:

10th November 2023. Cascade, Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago.

SPEAKERS: Richard Black (RB) and Eve Hayes de Kalaf (EHdK)

EHdK 00:01 I'm here in Trinidad with Richard Black who was born on the 7 February 1954 in Saint Lucia and travelled to the UK at the age of six in 1960. Richard, it's a pleasure to have you here today.

RB 00:18 Thank you very much. It's a pleasure to be here with you as well.

EHdK 00:21 Let's start by you telling us your story. How did you come to travel to the UK?

RB 00:32 A few years prior, my eldest brother and my mother had emigrated to...migrated to the UK somewhere in the late 1950s. After a few years, when they got it together financially, they were able to send for me, so I was able to travel to the UK. In those days, we travelled by boat. I was put in the care of a lady who was basically a caretaker. My caretaker. I can remember arriving. I think it was November of 1960.

EHdK 01:21 Did you travel on your own?

RB 01:23 No, I was there. I had somebody who was travelling to the UK as well. So, my mother put me in her care.

EHdK 01:28 Okay. And how did your mother...did she purchase your ticket?

RB 01:32 To be honest, I can't remember how it was done. If it was my brother. It would have been more than likely my brother would have done that.

EHdK 01:40 What do you remember about the journey? Do you remember packing your suitcase?

RB 01:47 I had one little cardboard suitcase. In those days, suitcases were made of cardboard. They used to call them cockroach dens. Right? I remember that. I was put in the care of this lady who looked after me the best she could. I guess I was a miserable youngster

at the time. I can remember arriving in a Bermuda shirt in the UK and short pants. Right? In the middle of winter. It was when I got outside. I think it was the worst winter ever.

EHdK 02:30 Did somebody come to collect you when you arrived?

RB 02:31 Yes, when we arrived at Paddington Station, I think it was from the docks where the ship docked, my brother and my mother met me at the station, and they carried me to Paddington. That's where they were living at a time. Paddington.

EHdK 02:45 How long had it been since you had seen your family at that point?

RB 02:49 It would have been about five, six years probably. Five, six years.

EHdK 02:54 So, your mother left for England when you were a baby?

RB 03:56 When I was a baby. I was with my grandmother at the time.

EHdK 03:00 Can you remember seeing her then for the first time?

RB 03:04 Well, I was confused because I was seeing basically a stranger, right? And my caretaker who escorted me to the UK where I said, "Look, here's your mum." And I was glad the journey was over. It was a horrendous journey.

EHdK 03:24 Okay, so you're six years old. You arrive in winter. Do you remember starting school?

RB 03:30 I remember going to Essendine Primary School.

EHdK 03:34 Where was that?

RB 03:36 That's in Paddington as well. The school is still in existence I checked on them recently. They're still in existence. I went there. When I arrived in the UK. I was hardly literate. I could hardly read. I took an interest in chess. For some reason, you don't have to be able to read in the early stages of playing chess but just understand the concept. And I excelled in that. And that was the motivation for me to learn to read. Right? So, I went through the primary system. And then from there I went to Cardinal Hinsley which is in Harleston. I think they changed the name now. I think they're Newman [Catholic] College now they're called the Newman College in Harleston. And from there, my education picked up a bit. I met this teacher who was originally from India. And she was very focused in terms of getting me to pick up speed so to speak. And from there, I didn't do that well in school to be honest. From there, I went to Paddington Tech to do photography. I worked with a few labs in the UK. I'm trying to remember the name now. Simon Bell and Associates. That was a dye transfer. That was just off the Edgware Road. And then I worked for Studio 10. They

were in the City of London. And then there was another photo shop. I can't remember where they were right now. But, yeah, so I worked in the UK. I worked for a number of years. And then I met my first wife and we got married. I was 24 at the time. I got married, a civil marriage at the Kensington and Chelsea Registry [Register] Office, right? We were married for 18 years. We had two children together, two daughters. Tania Marius was born in the UK. She now resides in Saint Martin, and she has her own family. And then Marissa is also my daughter who has her own story to tell. So, I'll probably introduce you at some other point in time to her as well.

EHdK 06:23 Okay, so you're working and living in London. You're a young man and you just got married. At what point did then you did you leave the UK and how did that come to be?

RB 06:35 When I got married, none of my in-laws were in the UK. My in-laws were in Trinidad. So, in 1978, my wife suggested that...she was studying accountancy in the UK. She said, well, that she wants to go home and introduce me to her family. That was in 1978. So, we came down [to Trinidad] in 1978 on vacation. Right? And met my then in-laws. We were reintroduced into that. And then we went...we stayed for carnival because, you know, you can't come to Trinidad and don't experience carnival. So, we stayed for carnival.

EHdK 07:17 Can you remember how many months you stayed for?

RB 07:21 We came in December. And we returned in March of 1979.

EHdK 07:27 And what were your impressions of Trinidad?

RB 07:29 Well, it was party kingdom! At that time, I was really into, you know, parties and I said, well, this place is off the grid. So, it was a real fun experience. And then we returned to the UK.

EHdK 07:49 So that was on the 8 March in 1979?

RB 07:53 I want to believe that's when we returned.

EHdK 07:58 What was that journey like? What can you remember? Did you travel by plane?

RB 08:03 Yeah, we flew. We were travelling at that time it was BWIA, British West Indian [Indies] Airways and then we came back via the same route as well.

EHdK 08:14 So you left Port of Spain. Can you remember what airport you arrived at?

RB 08:18 I think it would have been Heathrow.

EHdK 08:21 And can you remember anything about your interactions with the immigration officer when you arrived?

RB 08:25 When I returned and I handed my passport to the immigration person...and I can't remember if they kept it for any length of time. That was some 40+ years ago. But I didn't check. When I got my passport, I didn't even check it because as far as I was concerned, I was back home. And there was no reason for me to really question or even look into the passport.

EHdK 08:57 The passport you used then for that holiday [was a British passport]. Had you acquired it while you were living in the UK? And what process then did you go through?

RB 09:07 When I arrived in the UK, I had the old British colonial passport. It was still a British [1960s] passport. So, I had that passport and when that expired then I applied for a British passport. And there was no problem getting my British passport.

EHdK 09:26 Your passport initially was from Saint Lucia? So, you had a Saint Lucian colonial passport?

RB 09:34 Yes and we used that to travel to the UK in the first instance.

EHdK 09:42 And then obviously you spent time in the UK. Was Trinidad the first time that you had left the UK? Can you remember anything about how you acquired your passport?

RB 09:54 Well, I think it was in...either in July or when my wife...my passport had expired, the one I'd I travelled on as a kid. So, my wife said, you need to renew your passport. It was a simple process. I mean, I can't remember the process in detail now. But there was no problem in terms of me getting a British passport.

EHdK 10:19 This wasn't a UK Colonies [Citizen of the UK and Colonies, CUKC] passport? It was a British passport that you had acquired in the UK?

RB 10:26 It was a full British passport [a CUKC passport, stating RB was born in Saint Lucia].

EHdK 10:27 In the UK. And you travelled on this. But then upon return, what happened?

RB 10:31 When I arrived at the airport, it was stamped 'subject to immigration control'. I did not become aware of that until much later. Because basically, you return home. You hand

your passport to the immigration people, they stamp it and you go about your business. Right? And I was naïve at the time. I did not understand the complexities of British immigration laws. Or how it would impact on me as an individual.

EHdK 11:03 But also because you had a British passport and you were told that you were a British citizen and you were arriving in the UK as British with the documentation.

RB 11:12 With documentation to prove at the time that I was British.

EHdK 11:16 What happened next?

RB 11:19 Well, nothing really because in terms of the immigration aspect of it because the passport was taken, placed away in a drawer or somewhere accessible. It was not until my in-laws fell ill and then there were issues with my wife wanting to come back home and look after, say, let's go for a couple of months. Because basically she wanted to be there for her parents, and I wasn't going to fight that because she had just given birth a couple of years prior to my second eldest daughter.

EHdK 12:07 Did you return to Trinidad then?

RB 12:09 Yes, we had come on an extended vacation.

EHdK 12:18 And what year was that?

RB 12:21 That was in December of 1983. Nothing [happened during that trip] because the passport was still viable. It did not expire. So, I could travel with it.

EHdK 12:29 And how long did you stay in Trinidad?

RB 12:33 We stayed for a few years because at the time I was unemployed in the UK. I had just lost my job. The company was downsizing. It wasn't a problem for me to come to spend some time with my in-laws. It was not a problem for me because I had met them a few years before and I found them to be very nice. And they treated me well. So, it wasn't a problem. My wife's father was very sick. He subsequently passed away. And her mother subsequently passed away as well.

EHdK 13:06 So you spend a few years in Trinidad with your wife, with her family. When do you realise that there's an issue?

RB 13:15 Well, the passport has expired now. So, I need to go to the British High Commission and speak to somebody there. And then it all becomes clear to me because then they explain to me. I am no longer British. Saint Lucia gained independence on 22

February 1979. They got independence. So now I'm told, in those days the British High Commission wasn't in Saint Clair. It was down Independence Square. And I'm told now that you no longer purchase...[inaudible].

EHdK 13:56 Can you remember what year they told you that? You went on holiday to Trinidad in 1983?

RB 14:01 I can't remember the exact year but that would have been...that would have been just before or just around...I had travelled with the passport to the States to meet my other in-laws...But when that happened, I can remember going to the British High Commission and being told that I'm no longer British.

EHdK 14:27 Can you remember who you saw? Was it a receptionist? Did someone come down and speak to you? Do you know who it was? What did they say to you specifically?

RB 14:33 Well, Saint Lucia basically gained independence in 1979. 22nd February. And, as a result, I needed to get a Saint Lucian passport or a Trinidad and Tobago passport.

EHdK 14:52 And Trinidad became independent on 31 August 1962. So that was already independent.

RB 14:58 But there was no way I could get a Trinidad and Tobago passport. Saint Lucia has no High Commission or anybody in Trinidad that I could speak with.

EHdK 15:14 Did you try and contact the Saint Lucian High Commission?

RB 15:17 I was stunned. I was emotionally a wreck. I can remember and saying to her, "What am I going to do now?" And I can remember, the guy said, "Well, you know, get in touch." I didn't even have the slightest idea. And I want to say this. And I'm not ashamed of saying it. Intellectually, not mature. I was just, basically, forgive me if I get emotional because I'm starting to remember the negatives. Right? And I was a wreck. I didn't know what to do. I was 29 at the time.

EHdK 16:06 Did you share this story with anybody? We're in the mid-80s.

RB 16:10 I talked to my wife who was in Trinidad. I'm saying this is what people are going to say. So, she said, "Well, you need to go back and see if you could talk to somebody else." So, I went back after a couple of weeks. I swallowed my pride and went back because I was treated like, you know, dog mess. And I could see the smirk. I didn't know what it was at the time but now I could relate. I'm a lot brighter now, I'm a lot smarter now. So, I can relate to people's look. How they look at you, right? And I'm seeing this person tell me, "It hasn't changed. You still have to get in touch with the Saint Lucian people and they will get your

passport. You're not British. You're not British." And that was said in such a way that I understood it not because I was smarter but because of the hurt I felt at the time.

EHdK 17:22 And by telling you that your UK documentation is no longer valid. And by having no way of accessing the Saint Lucian authorities, you were effectively left stateless.

RB 17:35 Correct. And what is said to me, and I can remember saying this, right? I'll have to get a job. That's what I told the guy because I have children. I have a daughter. And whilst I was working in the UK, whatever monies I made went to my family. Now I'm here, the good thing was that my in-laws at the time had a small estate in Point [Fortin] in the south. When I was there, I was basically helping them while they were sick. There was no money. They didn't pay me. I stayed free and ate for free. And my family.

EHdK 18:27 How many times did you then approach the British High Commission during this time period?

RB 18:30 About three times. The last time I approached them, after they told me what it did, I didn't want to go back at all. I didn't want to go back at all because they embarrassed me, and I felt real shitty for want of a better term. But when my mum...when I learned that my mum died in 2000 and, by that time, my relationship with my wife had expired.

EHdK 19:02 Was your wife still in Trinidad?

RB 19:03 Yeah, she's still here [Trinidad]. My relationship because, I mean, you know...

EHdK 19:14 Were you were able to register with the Trinidadian authorities?

RB 19:18 Yes. When we realised that I was able to get paperwork, I got to residency. I wasn't going to be kicked out.

EHdK 19:30 Did you use your expired British passport to get residency?

RB 19:35 It had not expired yet. Because what she said was, we will be coming and going. My wife was a lot smarter than me. So let us apply for this thing in case, you know, we decide to, at some point in the future, come back to Trinidad and stay for longer so we'll have no problems.

EHdK 19:56 So how long were you in Trinidad in total?

RB 19:59 I was travelling backwards and forwards before the passport expired. I went to the States. We met with my in-laws in Philadelphia, right? So, we had a good relationship but when everything went south, so to speak, I really felt...Well, look, I was living in Saint

James which isn't too far from here. And my in-laws then asked me to leave. My wife then went back to the UK. She got British status. Right now, my wife is a citizen of the UK. They are saying that she could get, my ex-wife... This one has more rights in the UK than me! So, I'm stuck. I became homeless, right? For four years, I was basically a vagrant. I lived in empty lots. I got chased away a lot. I got shot at. If it wasn't a gun, it was stoned by a catapult. And were it not for the blessings and kindness of so many Trinidadians, I might have died. I might have not been around. But I met some good people. They were able to help me re-educate myself, help me get jobs on construction sites. I was able to do that. And then I realised...it was an epiphany. You know, you need to be smarter. You need to re-educate yourself. You need to do something to uplift yourself. And I started to work for a company, a construction company in Trinidad and Tobago. And they were basically doing construction work in the oil and gas and downstream industries. And I was lucky to get through that. And then I did some more training, and I became a health and safety advisor. And you know, the funny thing. The first major job I got working in the oil and gas field was for BPTT [British Gas Petroleum Trinidad and Tobago]. How ironic is that?

EHdK 22:39 And were you working with British employers as well?

RB 22:43 I was working with BP and they're just from the Savannah. They had offices just off the Savannah. And I was in charge of – imagine that – two fabrication yards. And I was there offshore and onshore as a health and safety advisor. And I was thinking all the time. How do I screw these people? What can I do to take revenge for what they did to me? But I didn't do that. I just did my job. Got paid for what I did. And that was it.

EHdK 23:23 What about your family in the UK? How did you communicate with them at that time? And did you try and tell them what was happening?

RB 23:29 Well, my mom was still alive. And she couldn't understand because my mother wasn't all that literate. She couldn't understand how everybody could go and come back and I couldn't come back. She probably felt at the time that I was playing games. But I just couldn't come back.

EHdK 23:49 Did you ever try and board a plane or buy a plane ticket?

RB 23:52 How would I do that? I normally. I couldn't do that because I had no documentation that would allow me to do that because the passport...they took the passport.

EHdK 24:07 They confiscated the passport? At the High Commission?

RB 24:10 Yes. Naïvely, I gave them the passport because at that time you're told that everything British is right. It's only now that you know that people in Gaza are left down the lurch because of British complicity. They basically stole Arab land and gave it to Israelites.



So now we're learning how complicated British and how deceitful the British government could be.

EHdK 24:48 Were you told by any staff at the High Commission that they would help you?

RB 24:54 I think somebody said to me - if memory serves me right because it's on their records and I want to believe that conversation, I don't want to misrepresent any situation - I believe they said to me they could get me a returning resident visa. They said they gave me the visa which is a total fabrication. I never received it. Nobody made contact with me concerning that.

EHdK 25:23 How can you have a returning resident visa if you don't have a passport to put it in?

RB 25:27 Well, you see, that was the thing as well because you must have a passport to put that in. And they said that when I had an interview with some guy who called me when this whole Windrush affair broke and said to me that a returning resident visa was offered to me. But they made no effort...they could not have made contact with me because I was on the streets.

EHdK 25:59 At that point, they saw you as a resident not as a citizen which is the essential difference. You were being reclassified as a non-Briton. The expectation was for you to get a Saint Lucian passport, to which you were entitled, to then be able to obtain a Returning Resident Visa which was impossible to you that time because she didn't have any of those documents. Okay, so when did things start to shift? When did things start to change?

RB 26:30 Well, when my daughter Marissa notified me that there was a huge scandal in terms of people that were British being denied their rights as being British and they were being denied re-entry. And so, I wrote a letter to the Passport Office in the UK. Gave them my particulars. And I got a response back after a couple of weeks and basically saying that the situation hasn't changed. I'm not British. Blah, blah, blah. And I'll send a copy of that letter for you.

EHdK 27:18 Sorry your daughter Marissa, where was she living?

RB 27:20 In Trinidad. She was born in Trinidad.

EHdK 27:23 Where did she hear the news about what was happening?

RB 27:29 She's always on the internet and would hear stuff from friends. Because we were not aware of anything going on. Because that basically says it is what it is. I'm in Trinidad



and at some point in time I'll apply for Trinidad's citizenship because I've been here long enough.

EHdK 27:47 Were you aware that there were other people who had been experiencing the same issues? Had you ever met anybody else?

RB 27:53 No, not the time. Only in 2018.

EHdK 27:58 How did that make you feel knowing that this was not just an issue that was affecting you as an individual but was something much bigger?

RB 28:04 When I realised that I said, "Well, this is some kind of...by the government to get rid of Black people from the UK." And to me it's a racist situation. So, I joined Twitter at the time and met a few, talked to a few people. Talked to Euen Herbert [Euen Herbert-Small]. I don't know if you've heard of Euen Herbert? Yes? Right, he talked to me and told me what was happening in terms of his experiences. I talked to Jacqui Mackenzie as well.

EHdK 28:38 Can you just explain who Jacqui Mackenzie is please?

RB 28:44 She's my attorney. She's a lawyer who is handling the immigration cases for a lot of Windrush people.

EHdK 28:50 How did you get in contact with her?

RB 28:53 I've known Jacqui since 2018. Last year, I wrote to her and she responded. And she said that she would take up my case and she's been dealing with my case ever since.

EHdK 29:14 In what way did Jacqui start to help you, in a legal sense?

RB 29:19 In terms of the compensation, she's handling the compensation aspect of it for me.

EHdK 29:30 Initially upon learning about your case, what was her response?

RB 29:34 Well, she thought I was just part and parcel of the whole conspiracy, right? I was a victim of the conspiracy. And she felt that I had a strong case. She's fighting my case in terms of getting proper compensation. She's handling my compensation aspect of it.

EHdK 29:54 How did that progress? In 2018, you contacted Jacqui Mackenzie. You said your daughter as well was helping you.

RB 30:03 And then I went ballistic. I had a better understanding of what was taking place. Right? I was on Twitter a lot explaining my situation. Meeting with people who are in similar

positions in the UK and who were also left stranded abroad because they were classified as no longer being British. Right? It started then. And then I had interviews.

EHdK 30:40 We're looking here at an article you did in The Independent with Nadine White. That was on the 29 of April 2021. And the headline on that is "Windrush Scandal victim Richard Black to return to the UK after 38-year exile."

RB 30:56 There's another, there's an earlier interview where it was Sky News. Sky News came down and they interviewed me home.

EHdK 31:08 And I believe that Channel 4 spoke with you as well.

RB 31:11 Yes. And Channel 4 with Zahra...What's her name again? She did an interview at home as well.

EHdK 31:29 Zahra Warsame I think her name is. There was a lot of interest, basically. Suddenly, a flurry of interest in your specific case. How did that make you feel?

RB 31:39 Well, at first, right, it was fun. But when I realise that it was to talk about myself and to share the story similar people were experiencing as a result of the situation. I felt, you know, I survived the hardships that I went through in Trinidad. I survived. And my lot...my situation was much better than a lot of other people who were less fortunate than me who did not meet the people that were pivotal in my change.

EHdK 32:21 And since then, have you met any other people in Trinidad who have had similar experiences?

RB 32:27 No, funnily enough no. I don't think Trinidadians are such...there are a few but I don't think there are many. Like, for example, the other territories like Jamaica and Saint Lucia to an extent. I felt I made my peace with God. I accepted the Muslim faith. And I tried to progress from where I was. Progress from where I was to try and elevate myself both mentally and physically. And spiritually. I've suffered a lot and I'm comfortable in terms of where we are now in terms of that. So, when they denied me re-entry I basically said, "Well, okay, you guys stay there. I'm in the sun. I'm not going to freeze."

EHdK 32:33 So you decided not to travel to the UK?

RB 32:35 Yeah, I decided... I had no options. I had no passport. No, nothing. I only got a Saint Lucian passport last week. Last week!

EHdK 33:41 Ok. And did that process come to be? A whole other story...So, how did you come to get your Saint Lucian passport?



RB 33:55 That in itself is just as complicated as it's taken a year and change to get a Saint Lucian passport. First of all, I had to make contact. Alright, we have some friends who had some Saint Lucian contacts. And when I explained to them the situation, considering that the British wanted me to get a Saint Lucian passport to go to travel, they were able to put me for a lady in Saint Lucia who's a Justice of the Peace. And I explained to her my position and she said that she would assist. At a cost, obviously, because it's a business, right? So, we ended up saving some money. And we were able to, via MoneyGram, send money. And then she started digging up. She got my birth certificate. She was able to get a copy of my Saint Lucian birth certificate. And then she got in touch with a local law firm in Saint Lucia. Right? And because I changed my name from Paul Marius to Richard Sheldon Black...And I just felt that, you know, because of the horrific circumstances that I had experienced earlier on. I just needed to do a reboot, as it were. A makeover. So, I changed my name to Richard Sheldon Black from Paul Marius. Apparently, very importantly, my mother...I was illegitimate. So, I should have obviously had my mother's surname. But that didn't transpire. It was on my birth certificate because my mother's surname was Daniel. So, I was Leo Marius on my birth certificate. So that was what went about. So, I called myself Paul Leo Marius, right? They picked up on that in Saint Lucia and said, "No. You should have been given your mother's maiden name," which was Daniel. Right? So, then I had to redo another deed poll. How many deed polls did we have to do? About three deed polls and send it over. Then we went to the High Commission...the Saint Lucian High Commission in the UK. Right?

EHdK 36:33 Which High Commission, sorry?

RB 36:35 The Saint Lucian High Commission.

EHdK 36:37 In the UK? So, who went there physically?

RB 36:40 She was my wife. My present wife went to the UK with the documents and passport sized pictures. Right? And they applied for a passport for me since 2021. I've been waiting for this passport which only arrived last week.

EHdK 37:03 You achieved it. Since being told since the 1980s that you were Saint Lucian and not British.

RB 37:11 I have no problems with being a Saint Lucian.

EHdK 37:16 Did you feel anything when you got finally got the passport?

RB 37:21 I cried. I was in tears. Because I...this lady [his wife] witnessed that I just broke down. It just meant that I was no longer trapped. You understand? And I could travel. And one of the things I used to say a lot at the time when I was in the UK, I travelled. When I had a passport, I travelled. So, I made excuses for not wanting to travel.

EHdK 37:51 Did you ever try and register as a stateless person and declare yourself status? Did you have any knowledge of that?

RB 37:58 I didn't have no knowledge of these things. Honestly. Though one of the subjects that I took to help re-educate myself was A-level law. Right? Self-taught as well. I got a credible pass. I got a C in A-level law. And so, I started to look at things, I started to read up on where I could on British immigration law. But I'm no lawyer.

EHdK 38:32 Your story is such an important one. Not just for this project but for everybody really to hear. And I'm really appreciative that you've taken the time to share your experiences with me today. I've got an impact statement here that you provided. A huge part of this is not just detailing what you can remember in terms of dates, your interactions with the British High Commission in Trinidad. And your efforts in trying to sort this situation out. But also, there's a very large component of this which is about the emotional impact on you. And now, I have no wish or desire for us to relive any of this trauma. So, we don't have to talk about this today. But what really struck me from your impact statement which is very is very powerful. For example, the impact that it had on your mental health and the impact that it had on your physical health as well. And you make a very strong case that because you didn't have access to the UK healthcare system [National Health Service], you've experienced many health issues. Because you're essentially blocked in something that was your right as a citizen to access. So, I think that's a very powerful document and text to read about everything you've been put through.

RB 40:05 You know, one of the things I learned from this, right? That people could be homeless but still have compassion for other homeless people. And were it not for some people who I met. Transients like myself who, when I tried to kill myself, they would say, "No, something will happen tomorrow. Something will happen later. Hold on there, boy...Hold on. Englishman, you want to will kill yourself? Don't be so stupid."

EHdK 40:56 What did come about was the Windrush Compensation Scheme. It was an opportunity then for you to have this trauma and this mistreatment recognised officially by the British state. What was your experience of the Compensation Scheme?

RB 41:17 They're insulting. They offered me...what was it? I can't remember. £30,000 or £40,000.

EHdK 41:31 Did you accept the money?

RB 41:35 [laughs]. No because my anguish and my pain over those years. I mean, my first wife and I, we separated. But that was as a result...because we had a good thing going



then. That was as a result of distress and frustration that was being felt. And I was in such a state that if it was me, I would have divorced me. If you see what I'm saying. And today we are good friends. We are very good friends and she's very good friends with my current wife. So that part of my life has been healed. But what really, Eve, what really irks and hurts me to this day and will always...was when I learned that my mother was sick in 2003. And I went back, and I begged these people. I pleaded with them. I told them that my mum was sick, right? And the prognosis wasn't good. They had no compassion. I didn't take their names. And I talked to somebody [at the British High Commission] and I talked to somebody and said, "I need to get back. Please allow me to come back." Because my mum...and then I went back. It was when I learned that she was sick and when I learned that she had passed away. August 12 my mom passed away. I went back in tears crying and I left the British High Commission in tears. And I was just lost. And I will never, never, never forgive them for that. I cannot forgive them for that. And all the hurt and trauma that I've experienced. The most hurtful part of it was not being able to say goodbye or be there for my mum for when she was ailing and when she passed. I'm a Muslim. But I will ask my God not to allow...there must never be forgiveness for that. Because somebody, everybody has a mother. Some people may not get along with their mum but you just cannot treat people that. I was never involved in any criminality or anything when I was in the UK.

EHdK 44:25 Did they ever try and reach out to you at any point? Beyond you physically going to the High Commission and asking for help?

RB 44:32 When I started to send letters to the Windrush thing, they had somebody. A gentleman came on from the Home Office. A phone call [redacted] and she was basically telling me what to do. And she was Home Office and she was telling me to write letters. And she was very good. She told me to come to the British High Commission. And I was reluctant to do that. And I told her, "No the experiences I've had there. I'm not going to be embarrassed again." She convinced me to meet a local at the British High Commission.

EHdK 45:16 Who did you meet with?

RB 45:22 I can't remember her name, right. But I talked. I met with her. And she had an interview and she had my biometrics taken in 2018. In 2018, I had the biometrics done, right? Oh, I remember that. The Home Office reminded me of when I had it done. They were able to give me a date as well. In March of 2018 I had my biometrics done...And then it evolved from there. I talked to them. I kind of roughed them up as well online when I had the opportunity. I told them they were a pack of...I don't really want to use any kind of obscene language but I told them exactly what I thought of them. What is the guy? Sajid Javid was the first one and then Priti Patel and then this [Suella Braverman]...She's a female so I don't want to be too harsh on her. I may have my mental issues but I think there's something wrong with that lady. Seriously wrong with her. She's not real.



EHdK 46:35 What about the response that you got from the Windrush Help Team? Did you speak to them over the phone over the phone? How did you find them? How did they treat you?

RB 46:39 Well, to be honest, I've had some issues with some of the people that I have dealt with. But this current individual that I'm speaking with, she's showing a lot of humanity and concern and if you read some of the stuff that she told me. She was happy when I got the passport. And very early on, she told me that I am a person that should not have been in this position. She didn't come out and say it like that, you know. She said I'm a victim of the bureaucracy. And I understand what she means by that, right?

EHdK 47:17 I imagine this is the latest correspondence you received from them which was 19 of May 2023. And in the letter, they confirm then that the Home Office will provide support to you so that you and your wife can return to the United Kingdom and what they're proposing. First of all, they're saying it won't be deducted from the compensation award that you've been offered. And that in addition to the compensation awards, you will be provided with flights, airport transfer, accommodation for up to four weeks in the UK, rental either in a hotel or Airbnb accommodation. That they'll provide you with daily living costs during the settling in period and then help you with clothing, suitcases and medications. It says that this assistance has been provided to you under the urgent and exceptional payment policy. And the typical amount of these payments is normally less than £5,000. However, this is considered on a case-by-case basis. It also says, once you've received your passport, please let us know your intended travel date as soon as possible. So first, have you received your British passport?

RB 48:32 My Saint Lucian passport.

EHdK 48:35 Your Saint Lucian passport. So, you're receiving a Saint Lucian passport and on that Saint Lucian passport they're going to put a returning residents visa. Is that correct?

RB 48:44 Which they are in the process of doing right now.

EHdK 48:47 So through the Windrush Compensation Scheme despite being told that you are a victim of bureaucracy, despite the acknowledgement from the Home Office that you were poorly, appallingly treated in fact. And despite being offered the means to return to the UK and resettle in the UK, you're still not being offered a UK passport?

RB 49:11 Well, let me explain to you what happens there now. And this is how they're smart. I could get a British passport through the Windrush scheme. But it comes as if you like if you're no longer a citizen, but you get it through naturalisation. So, if you're a naturalised citizen my concern would be, am I less than an actual [citizen]?

EHdK 49:44 So, effectively, you would enter the UK as a Saint Lucian. You would be given residency in the UK and then after the specified time period you would be given the opportunity to naturalise?

RB 49:56 No, there's no time period. As I get back, I could do that immediately.

EHdK 50:03 But if you naturalise as a citizen you wouldn't be recognised as British.

RB 50:10 It is a two-tier level so that is a trick. But like I said...

EHdK 50:20 As I believe they extended the courtesy to your wife as well. Is that correct?

RB 50:23 Yes, she's received a residency. No, one of them was born in the UK and the other one was not born in the UK.

EHdK 50:33 What year was the child born in the UK?

RB 50:35 1979. In September.

EHdK 50:38 So, you have one child who is British effectively? And one child who is not recognised? Where is this going now then? Are you planning to return to the UK?

RB 50:57 Yes, we are returning. The tentative return date would be April. We plan to leave Trinidad on April 14 2024, which is a Sunday, and arrive in the UK Monday 15 of April 2024.

EHdK 51:19 Has the Home Office already purchased your tickets for you? Your flights?

RB 51:23 They're basically waiting for me to get the returning resident stamp in my passport which they have currently.

EHdK 51:33 Who has your Saint Lucian passport right now?

RB 51:36 That's the visa application centre. One Woodbrook Place [VFS Global, Port of Spain]. They handle all British visa applications.

EHdK 51:45 Let me see if I have understood this clearly. You acquired your Saint Lucian passport in Trinidad. Did you post that physically to the UK for processing?

RB 51:56 No. What happens it was FedEx...not FedEx. Sent via DHL to the courier place only about five minutes away from here.

EHdK 52:10 So really, as we're speaking, we're still in the middle of this experience, aren't we?

RB 52:12 Yes, they are actually processing my visa right now.

EHdK 52:20 You're not at the end of your journey then? And when you travel to the UK in 2024... hoping that everything runs smoothly for you moving forward. When you travel to the UK in April 2024. Are you planning to settle there? Or are you planning to, you know, address the documentation situation and return to Trinidad? What are your plans?

RB 52:44 Well, I am of the opinion that I'm a citizen of three countries. The country of my birth being Saint Lucia. The country I grew up which is the UK. And the country where I learned how to become a man which is Trinidad. So, I have allegiances to three countries. I have a residency in Trinidad with my place of birth in Saint Lucia. So, I'll be visiting. I can't turn my back, I have commitments here in Trinidad, but I want to be able to be in the UK and try to reconnect with family, friends. Loved ones. Try to heal some fences which were obviously shattered with my daughter.

EHdK 53:39 Where are you planning to live?

RB 53:40 Notting Hill.

EHdK 53:42 And what about pensions? Because you must have paid tax in the UK.

RB 53:47 The Home Office recognised that and they've said that they will give me letters to be able to go and get my pension, to get whatever pension. I wouldn't be entitled to a full pension but at the end of the day, I lay down at their doorstep. If you stopped me from coming back, how can I have made contributions towards a full pension?

EHdK 54:13 That's the leverage right for the compensation? Are you going to accept the compensation? What do you think? We're not just talking in monetary value, obviously. But what do you think you are owed? What does the British need to do to rectify and to acknowledge the harm that it has caused you and your family?

RB 54:41 First of all, I don't think that the harm done can be repaired in any way at all whether it be financially or otherwise. You cannot bring back the life you had. So, I had to move on. My mother has passed away. There's no way I could be there for her. I can pay my respects at the grave. So, there is no financial compensation that will do for me. Right? You cannot offer me sufficient funds for that. Right? What I ask of the British Home Office is to do some serious introspection. You're dealing with human beings. You're dealing with people. There are people all over the Caribbean, all over in Africa, in India, Pakistan. All



over, right? That have been ill-treated as a result of this. You need to come speak the truth and let people who have a right to be in the UK be in the UK. It's as simple as that. I don't ask. Yes, I want my compensation. Yes, I should be compensated. But the reality is this. It's bigger than compensation because people's lives have been turned upside down. And I have to consider myself fortunate that I was able to find the wherewithal, the spirituality to survive. And even now, it affects me and, to a degree, my wife as well because the reality is this that I have developed, I probably need to see a psychiatrist to be honest. The kind of harm that I've suffered and the anger issues that I have. I need to see somebody. I need to see someone so I could, you know, basically get rid of the frustration. I mean, I do a lot of things. I hunt in Trinidad, and I cannot wait. Hunting season is from October to February, the end of February. And every year, I find myself...she [my wife]'ll tell you. I can't wait for hunting season to start. It's something that I love to do. So, it just takes away all the negativity. And I'm at peace.

EHdK 56:51 So we're about to conclude the interview now. Is there anything else that you would like to share or say before we finish?

RB 56:58 I want to thank you for seeing me and giving me an opportunity to go through this and probably somewhere down the line people...somebody will see it and try to appreciate what one person went through. There are others who had more dire situations than me. I have to say thank God that I have survived. And I continue to try and grow as a person. But one of the things that I will never do, I will never forgive them for this.

EHdK 57:40 Thank you so much for your time.

RB 57:42 Thank you very much.