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Harry Goulbourne

Life story interview with Paul Thompson

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Principle investigator's thematic highlights

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Harry Goulbourne

Interviewed by Paul Thompson

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1: Colour and class in Jamaica

Caribbean families, Jamaican families in particular, are very colour distributive, and many of the Goulbournes were sort of brown to white, white to brown. But my father's father's father, so it's going three back, was on the dark side, and he felt he was very discriminated against – this is my father's story. He, therefore, left [St Elizabeth], and went into the hills, into the mountains of Clarendon, and bought himself some land when some of the big plantations were being split up and sold off to small settlers. And so there's still the case today that, in Jamaica, I sometimes come across folks who are named the same as myself – which is an unusual name – and obviously are related, and the myth goes back to Manchester, and they are brown to white. Whereas us, in the Clarendon hills, [the Goulbournes] are black. ...

[That ancestor who moved into Clarendon] would have been late 19th century, I would have thought, because my father was born in 1911, and my mother in 1914. So he's talking very much of the well, not turbulent, adventurous, I suppose, looking back now, years of the post-slavery period.
(p. 2)

2: Parents: mother as manager

My father was trained as a tailor. So he was, if you put it in a British context, "the village tailor", and he trained his eldest son – my eldest brother – as a tailor, to do that. But they never intended - that could not sustain them. The second part of it was mixed farming, having land. And so, they would have some milking cows, some calves, some goats, some pigs, and, of course, growing a variety of products, including sometimes some sugar cane, depending on where the land is, certainly bananas, cocoa, coffee, and of course, home products.

(p. 6)

My father couldn't get a job in [Britain], as a tailor, which was very frustrating for him. I could tell you any amount of stories of him taking us to Burton to have a suit cut, and the frustration you could, looking back, you could see. He would tell these chaps how to do it. And one suit, I remember, of his, took something like four years to collect, because on every occasion he went to collect it, he found a fault! And you could see what's happening is, sheer frustration! He could never get a job as a tailor. So he just worked at Royal Arsenal down the road from here, at Woolwich, for very many years. He said he didn't do very much, all he did was - he had a plot in which he planted tomatoes and other vegetables, which he used to take home! So whatever skills people may have had, when they came here, they were ordinary workers.
(pp. 29-30)

My mother, on the other hand, what she did, before she migrated and came here, would have been, obviously, to run a household, to manage most of these things, or a number of them, as well as, at the end of the week, in the reaping season, to buy up, from other farmers, to reap all the products, where they would employ people to do this, and then she would take this into the bigger centres where these things would be sold. You might have come across the term "higglers"... The higglers, traditionally, in Jamaica, was very much that type of person from the countryside, delivering food to the bigger towns, or to the city of Kingston... What my mother would do, as I learnt later on, was to take agricultural products to those parts, sell them, and buy more urban products, such as oils, butter, and so forth, and return with them.

So would she actually sit and sell, herself?

Oh yes, yes, but she'd have helpers with her as well. And she would have regular customers at those places. So decades later, when she returned to Jamaica, she still had links with some of the people in May Pen, Spalding, whom she would still relate to....

In my family, the person who ran the money entirely, was my mother! ... My mother, in terms of just human intelligence, was a superb person. In terms of arithmetic, in

particular, you could throw any amount of numbers at her and ask her for the conclusion, and within a matter of minutes or seconds, you would have them. In buying and selling she used to say - she took her scales with her, because each of these sellers would have their scales, but that she could put them in her hands, throw them up, and tell the buyer what the weights are, and if they want to test it, they could test on the scale, and it would be exact!

She was a very very sharp leader of people. When my mother died, in this country, years later, and we took her body back to Kingston, I was overwhelmed by the amount of people who turned up from Britain, the United States, and throughout Jamaica, to her funeral, people whom I knew only peripherally. And she had a profound impact on those.

Now, she ran the family, in terms of investments. In this country, my parents bought a number of houses, rented them, and in Kingston as well, and a number of lands. So by the end of their day, they were quite substantially rich, but there's so many of us this didn't get anywhere! But it was always my mother, my father was very cautious, but he always left it to my mother to deal with, and she was always the person who took those [investment] decisions.
(pp 6-8)

3: Savings partnerships

The only area, in terms of finances, where my father took the decision, was - you might have heard of the system of "Jamaican partnerships"? That's nothing to do with sex or companies, you know! It goes back to the idea of buying of land for the ex-slaves, freed people. But banks and insurance companies, etc., would not invest in people, and particularly in the migration story of coming to Britain, they couldn't go to a Building Society, or to a bank, etc., so they had to depend on their own resources. And what they did was to re-institute the partnership system, whereby - it could be small or large, and it was all a matter of trust. So there are 20, 15, 50 of us, we contribute, say, £5 or £10 – and you do it according to your ability – to a common fund, and each week, one person would draw a "hand", as it's called, and one person would draw all the money. But they continued to contribute throughout, continuously, until each person has had a hand. You

withdraw what you have put in. So there is no interest, and it's all done through trust. Now, for that system, for that network, you need one person whom everyone will trust. And, of course, that was my father. He was the person.... My father was the centre of a number of these, because people trusted him. The trust was within himself and my mother, but he was the person who led that and organised that. And, and that's how they were able to help people who were migrating into the country from Jamaica, help them to buy their first properties, and, of course, their own....

You will get in proportion to what you put in. So there might be more than one person drawing their hand at any given week, but it will be carefully worked out by the head of the partnership. And sometimes you might not want to draw a hand, because you don't want to invest in something else, so you could leave it and, therefore, later on draw a double hand. And it was always an intricate thing. I've never participated myself, other than as a child, in London, in Camberwell. I recall, very much, being put on a bus, with a stack of cash, to take across London! So you're put on a bus, and you're collected at the next bus stop, and you're taken to a household, and you're given a cup of tea and a piece of bread. And then you're taken back - and you're not supposed to open, you're not to look at what it is that you're delivering! That was very much a primitive banking system. (pp. 7-9)

4: Land and class in Jamaica

Where I gained my experience more of [land and class] was living, for a while, with my [paternal] uncle, whom I always, when I was studying Russian History at 'A' level, I always thought of him as a "kulak", you know, the Russian kulak! A rich peasant! Because he owned a lot of land, compared to my parents – well, a lot in that context, something like 30 acres.

I lived with him for a while, and he, at his household, he had two horses, two or three donkeys, a number of cows, and a bull, which served the region, and he planted all the crops that I mentioned, in different patches, and he simply oversaw all of these. And he had a number of people who lived on different patches of his land, and who made a living for themselves. But like feudalism, later on as I learned in school here, for me coming to England as a child and learning about feudalism, I could see it, because on my uncle's

land, he'd have these people who were not related by blood, but they were seen as family. There was always a distance which, as a child, I couldn't quite understand. They wouldn't come into the inner part of the household, they were always "out there" somewhere. But my uncle could call on them to do anything, anything at all, and they would do these things. They would also use part of his land for themselves, would build small huts for themselves, but basically they were working there for him. And then, of course, when it came to reaping season, where you need to reap crops very quickly - otherwise they rot and you lost them – then he would bring in other people and pay them accordingly. ...

As a child, living in that situation, because my parents were [in London], and because we had lots of uncles and aunts around, all of whom on their own plots of land and so forth, we were seen, alongside a number of other families who were similar, to be somewhat different from those who didn't own their houses and their land.

We were also different from a group of people who rode on horseback all the time, and owned a substantial amount of land. I recall two families, for example. One who was more white than black, and I never, as a child, I never saw the head of that household, off of horseback. So, as a child, you thought he and his horse was always wonderful! And he was always formally upright, with a hat, hard hat, and his bridle, the formal wear for horse-riding. Whereas with us, as kids learning to ride, I learnt to ride bareback, without any accompaniment at all. You get on to a horse, and it gallops with you, and you stay on or you fall and break your neck! ...

I think they related to [those with more land] - not in an economic sense, but I think they looked up to them, and that they were their betters. I'm thinking, now, very much more in terms of my uncle's family, who were fairly well-heeled in terms of the wherewithal of things. There were a couple of our cousins who were school teachers, postmistresses, constables, all of which were very important in that sort of setting. You look back now, and you realise they're neither here nor there, but in that setting, they were considered important.
(pp. 11-13)

5: Wealth through migration

I can recall also, however, is that with migration, people who had migrated – like my parents – I had an uncle who had migrated, much earlier, to Cuba. And the story I remember of him was a story that he's a rich man. Whether he was rich or not, I don't know! I don't think he could have been, actually! But he had been to Cuba, and apparently, when he was very angry, he would swear in Spanish! And that was a real mystery! He lived in a big house, a huge house, with quite a bit of land, and his house had an upstairs, which was quite something to have, on two floors. ...

But people like my other uncle, who had migrated, came back from Cuba, and was rumoured to be very rich, and a bit mad, because he would swear in Spanish! And he never did any work himself, I recall. He was always sitting on his veranda, holding court! ...

But it was quite a catch. It was a difference if you had parents who had migrated. I recall, for example, that my parents would send a parcel of clothes, over Christmas, and they would send jumpers, short-sleeved - do you remember the fifties sort of tops? And when I came here in the late fifties, I used to be mystified, later on, why did they send us these jumpers? Why did we like them? It wasn't until, in the seventies, when I went back to those areas, I realised we did need them, because it gets very cold in those hills, in the evenings. But the very fact that you could wear things which were different from other kids, also marked you off.

People assume, sometimes, that the people who migrate from one society to the next, are the poorest. It's not so at all. Because, remember the piece of work we did together, when you invited me to conduct those interviews? One of the things that struck me then, talking to those folks, and to my parents later on, was that you had to be able to put together £85 cash, to buy one air ticket – which was a lot of money. You had to be able [to raise it]. If you were coming by ship, it was less. And I remember, as a school kid in secondary school in Peckham, how those kids who had arrived here by boat, by ship, you regarded them to have come from poorer families than those of us who had come by plane!

(pp. 15-16)

6: Grandmother in a migrant family

My mother's father and mother I knew very well. And so my grandmother, on that side, I always knew her as being blind, because by the time we were conscious, as kids, she was pretty elderly. She was entirely grey, white hair – hair like yours. And white. Now, they used to describe to us the differences of colouration, which didn't make any sense to me until, centuries later, reading Edward Long! So that, technically, in the Jamaican kaleidoscope of colours, she would have had a percentage of black and, therefore, she wasn't entirely white, but physically, and in every way, she was, everything about her. So she was older, as I said, than my grandfather. ...

My grandmother, as I said, I always recall her, remembered her, very much, as sitting in a chair – not active. Always having a story to tell, always bringing us to her, all of us, as grandkids, and knowing each of us without having seen us clearly, because she was partially blind, and by the end of her life, she was entirely blind. She would say that she needed us to plait her hair for her, and to rub it. ...

When my grandfather died, because when my parents left Jamaica, we had this one house and then a second one, and as more people from the kinship group migrated, my parents suggested that one of my mother's sisters, whose husband and older kids are also in this country, and my grandparents, that we should all move to one of those houses and live there. Then we lived there for some time, and that auntie, whom I was living with, she decided to move to a place called Williamsfield – you might have passed through there en route to Mandeville. She bought a piece of land there, and built her own house there. My grandmother went to stay, to live with her, my grandfather stayed with us in the house.

The story I related of his death in 1958/59, meant, then, that my parents had to take immediate action, so my father had to come to Jamaica, and decided that it's time for all of us to come to Britain, that we might, as kids, all come here. Now, I didn't want to at all, because I was very close to my grandmother, even though she was not in the same household. And for a while then, for about the period of three months, since my

grandfather had died, my father had arrived, we moved into my auntie's house in Williamsfield. And in that period of time, I spent a lot of time with my grandmother, talking and so forth. I didn't want to leave, and I kept begging my parents that could I just stay? And they said, "No, it can't be done". ...

But the last - I think my childhood was quite miserable in some respects, because of missing my parents, and the last great pain came, I think, in my childhood, was when, one evening, coming home from school in Camberwell, I think I was still in primary school, my mother, knowing how close I was to her mother – to my grandmother – called me, and then sat me down and said I must relax for a while, and I was wondering what's happening, and then she announced that my grandmother had died. And, of course, I cried and cried. And then I never cried again until … until my parents died. And that was decades later. So my proximity to her was very profound.

So, in a way, you had become closer to her, than to your own parents, at that point?

Oh yes, definitely. Oh yeah. And that is because, of course, in the migration story, lots of children, I think, get cut off from their parents.
(pp. 17, 19-21)

I discovered through my grandmother, one of the things she always wanted is to read to her The Bible, or sometimes to sing her a hymn from the Sankey Hymn Book. In a sense, one's introduction to literature is really from them, in that way, first. I would say that, in terms of one's appreciation of Shakespeare, I see those as all one, as one package, in a way. (p. 23)

I remember, vaguely, in my earliest memories, that when [my mother] was to come [to London], I was also to come with her. And up to the last moment, the idea was that I would, even though I wasn't the youngest, nor the eldest, but because I was very close to her, that I would also be going with her. And it was something of a shock that I wasn't, at the last moment. And for years, I was told that England was over those mountains, over those hills, and I literally believed it! Because the planes, as they were passing over, would disappear behind those mountains, and England was beyond those mountains! It

wasn't that far away, in a child's imagination, but it was far away, because you couldn't get there yourself, you know!

I suspect it was nothing more than that [my father] must have thought the three years was not really on, because I think he was here about two years or something before she came, and then when she came, then George came, then Ann came, and that was supposed to have been the end of it. But then, because of the death of my grandfather, who was then in charge, and they've never said it, but the debate in this country, in the late fifties, that there should be a stop to immigration from the Commonwealth, a lot of families decided that their spouses, their children, they'd better bring them into this country. ...

You made that point just now that you were supposed to go with your mother. Were you very upset during that phase after she'd gone?

Oh yes. I remember there was a cake made, with a very sweet top, and this was to be taken for my father. ... But the cake and me were supposed to be really close, so it was wrapped up together! And then when they brought the story to me that I wasn't going to come, they decided to cut the cake, and give me a piece of it. So there's still a type of ingredients to cakes, when I taste it now, reminds me of that incident, because it was such a vivid one that I wasn't going. Not that I wanted to go anywhere, but that I would be with my mother, because I was at that age, very close to my mother. ...

I think it must spring from that experience of the tremendous loneliness, which is not spoken much of in the literature, either creative literature or official academic literature, of the pain there is in the experience of migration. People are cut off, and people have a great sense of loss, a tremendous sense of loss. So that when we came here and I saw my mother, the memory was there, but she wasn't the same person. So it took time.

You were ten?

Yes, that's right. So it's six years or so. Yes, at that age, it seemed like an eternity.

So did they seem like strangers?

Oh yes, very much so. Very much so. My father, when he came to Jamaica, I knew he was my father, because that's what they said, and we're expecting this man and he came, but he was alien to me. But what, what broke the barrier with him, was that he was so overjoyed to see us, he hugged us, kissed us and made much of us, took us out, etc., etc., during that period. ...

Mike [Phillips] and I were then giving this talk, and one of the reminiscences that I brought up was how people always had their grips under their beds, because the notion of migration was so alive that they would be returning. Mike's recollection was that in his family and network, people always had their case, their trunk, their grip, on top of the wardrobe! Again, the same thing, always ready to depart! And he felt that when he grew up, he was never going to have a suitcase on top of a wardrobe! But I think I still have a suitcase under a desk somewhere, if not under a bed!
(pp. 53-56, 59)

7: A Christian household, Jamaica in London

I can remember several Sundays, because Sunday breakfast was a big thing in a Jamaican household in those days. But sometimes, we'd be sitting with tramps off the streets in Camberwell, because anyone who knocked at the door – and remember, a number of Irish people would – and [my mother] simply said, "Come in". And we always had a table where there was an extra plate, and it springs from this religious thing that you must always have [space] for the "unknown guest". This is not just a myth, it was a reality. And quite often, people would be brought in like that. People would knock and say they haven't got anywhere to stay. My parents rented rooms in the houses they had, could they stay somewhere? My father would say, "Look, if they can't pay, no." But then he would back away, and my mother would say, "Well, there's this room here. Just come, never mind if you can't pay". So that our household was always open to all and sundry – poor whites, poor Irish, Africans, Afro-Caribbean people – right across the board. As a result, I think I grew up with this idea that "my home is *my* home, I don't want all and sundry to come in!" (LAUGHS) I think I find it difficult to live with a lot of people around me, because I was brought up in that way.

Our house, in Jamaica, when they returned, you'd find all kinds of mad, crazy people at home. Seriously, I'd go there, and there will be any amount of people. They lived, their house was in a garden of about half an acre, and all kinds of "riff-raffs" and people would be around! All they had to claim was that they love Jesus (LAUGHS), or that they were in need, and then [my mother] would say, "Look, you can help. I can help. You can help. You can help", etc.. But it did mean that, in Jamaica, my mother, people who came to her funeral, ranged from the lowest of the low, in social order, right up to Justices, fairly senior people, even some people at the University.
(pp. 30-31)
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8: Religion and a rift with mother

I had a great fracture, great rift with my mother, which lasted until her death, in a sense, in a way, and that is - I became very religious at around the age of 15, 16. Indeed, if you remember, in the sixties, you could leave school at the age of 15, and midway, in preparation for my 'O' Levels, I decided to leave school to enter the Church to be a clergyman. And I went to one of these Evangelical Colleges in Northern Ireland, amongst that group of the Paisleyites, mmm. So I knew of Paisley as a 15, 16 year old.

And at the age of 15, I decided that, yes, I would want to become that, leave school. Our Deputy Headmaster was a devout Baptist, at school in Peckham, pleaded with me to say, please, I shouldn't leave. Eventually I did. And I went off to Ireland for a year. At the end of that year, I decided, "Well, actually, this is a terrible decision! I ought to go back to school". So I went and saw the Deputy Headmaster, and he said, "I'm pleased you've seen the light! Come back". And they took me back to school, and I went back....

But the point about that, in terms of religious consciousness and my parents, my relationship with my mother, was that she was very distraught when I decided to abandon that side of life, even though I stressed that I still had an interest in religion, but not as a worshipper as such, but I wanted to be a theologian.

I was very well read about people like Robinson, you remember Robinson, Bishop of Woolwich? My Headmaster introduced me to him, and I got to know him. Margarita Laski was a friend of our Headmaster, and again, because of my interest in religion, he introduced me to her - I met them frequently, and discussions. Then I was very influenced by my history teacher, who saw my interest in things, and introduced me to writers like Paul Tillich, the theologian, and [Dietrich] Bonhoefer and so on. So by the time I left school, I was pretty well grounded in theological thinking. And I went to Lancaster, in fact, I was encouraged to go to Lancaster to do theology and philosophy – which is what I went to do – because at the time, the leading figure in the English-speaking world, was a man called Ninian Smart, who was not looking at Christianity, but "Comparative Religion". I felt that was where my interest was, not in the narrowness of my background of Pentecostalism. But I still was very much caught up with that.

When you went to Ireland, what happened there?

What happened there? I think what happened, I fell in love with a girl. I remember, it was my birthday, I was 16 during the course of that, and I was walking along the North Antrim coast, in Northern Ireland, and I became very fascinated by this girl, who had also come, from Somerset, to the same College. She was a descendant of the great hymn writer Wyatt. Very much from that Evangelical background. And I recall at the end of the year, when I realised that, look, if I was going to have this interest in girls and women, I can't become a religious man! But, more importantly, she had done her 'O' Levels, and at the end of the year when I said, "Look, I'm abandoning this", she said, "Well, what are you going to do? You have no qualifications, you're now quite old", and in those years, at the age of 16, you were old! And I thought about it, and I thought, "God, yes! You're here, and I've done nothing with my life. I should do something". ...

But that's what I think happened in Ireland. Also, I learnt a bit about the politics of religion, in the sense that the people who were heading this college I went to, I realised that they did not have leadership qualities, and that they were very hypocritical, that their interest was very economic, in terms of what they could get for themselves.... So I became very disillusioned by that, in those kinds of ways. And I suppose it was a period of youth, of developing, whereas, I suppose, a lot of other young people might have been

interested in Communism or Socialism, or other isms. For me, my background there was religion. And that was how one approached it. And it wasn't until I got to university that the political dimension of youthful consciousness came into the picture.

[My mother] felt that I'd veered too much towards "established religion", that all this thing about discussing things and querying things was wrong, and that's not Godly, that's Satanism, that's bad! That having too much of a formal education was also not right. And she opposed, very strongly, my idea of going to university to study these things, when, really, I should be in the Church. I used to be a very good public speaker, preacher, so she wanted me to continue in that vein. She travelled a great deal within the Caribbean and North America, amongst these Evangelists, and she was quite a brilliant speaker, and she wanted me to be in that same vein. And by not being that, I was questioning her authority which, for me, again, meant that this is something that I did not want to follow.

I've always seen my liberation from my mother as a liberation from religion! And for me, that's a very important victory. ... She is a very powerful, persuasive, kind person, but with that kindness, I felt, also went a destructive quality, to control people's lives.
(pp. 22-26)

9: Farm life and first school

Uncle Charles, whom I lived with, and who had, I suppose, a quiet kind of influence on me, and his wife, who I was very fond of, and she was very fond of me, and was very mothering to me, in a way. He was, I suppose, of all our relations, I always think of him as being a very rich man, in that he owned quite a number of houses in, not Kingston, in Spalding, and he had quite a bit of land. And as a small child observing him, he was very much a Godfather figure, very much the person "up there", to whom you look up to.

I don't think it could have been more than two or three years, but the very formative years, I think. Because he had a structure, and the structure of the day was something like this, that you get up very early morning and you have a cup of tea – hot tea. It doesn't mean tea, as in this country, it means herbal teas, mm? Bush tea, that's right. And then you go off, and you see to the animals, which might mean helping to milk the cows,

taking out the pigs, etc., but sorting some things like that out. Then you would come home, and you have breakfast, which is some solids. And then you would get off to school.

You'd go to school, you'd come back home for lunch, and you go back to school. And when you come home in the evening, again, you have to help with the animals and so on. And so your day, as a child, is a very arduous and long one. And if you didn't do well at school, then they would know, and you would have to give an account of yourself! And don't forget, in those days, we didn't have things like exercise books, you had a slate, a piece of slate, and a piece of chalk, and you'd move from one lesson to the next, and if you didn't remember, the following day, what you'd been taught, you'd be given a good caning. And if your uncle knew that you'd had a caning for not remembering, you'd have another caning!
(pp. 28-29

10: Peckham Manor School and the influence of Fred Murphy

[In Jamaica to go to 'the school'] which we call secondary school, that was already a great achievement, bearing in mind that, in the Caribbean, secondary school meant what, in this country, was a grammar school education – at that time. So they felt that, naturally, you would do well, because you're attending something which was very elitist, in the Caribbean, to go to a grammar school – secondary school.

Secondly, the tradition of entire trust in teachers, so they felt that the fact that they clothe you, feed you, send you to school, you're fine, because the pastoral care that they were used to in the Caribbean, of teachers acting totally in loco parentis to the child, they're not to know that, in this country, that had gone a long time ago! (LAUGHS) So they just assume, if you're going to go to school, you will do well. And so all they wanted to know is that on your Report, it says that you're doing fairly well. And, of course, that misled a whole generation of parents and their children, and that is the beginning, if you like, of the understanding of that story of how badly West Indian kids did in the school system, in that generation.

It was an accident, and I realise that very much, that [in England] I happen to have fallen at a school where there were, indeed, some very good genuine teachers.
(p. 49)

I always felt that I could do what one wanted to do. And from Jamaica, I felt that, really. Oh yes, because there were three of us – two cousins and myself – and we used to compete against each other in two things. This cousin of mine, I mentioned, who is in New York, and one in Canada, we always competed in two things – mathematics and English. And we're all three, always the top in our class there. And I never felt that there was anything, in terms of matters of education, that if you wanted to do, you couldn't do.

And when I came here, I found the school system demanded nothing of me. ... I still feel strongly about that, that in the State sector, in this country, is they just waste the natural instinct to learn, of children. I think children are like sponges, they just absorb. And I certainly did, as a child, I just absorbed everything around me, and it's not an effort at all. But there's something about the British State system which says that children are there to have a good time, they shouldn't bother with this and so forth. So a number of my years were wasted, I think, in that way.

When I really learnt, I think it came through the religious instinct. If you take religion in that context seriously, you have to be able to read, you have to be able to have discussions, you have to understand what others are saying, and I think, also, once one is introduced to some of these other writers, and you realise they're people who are concerned about the same sort of issues as you are. I think also, from the background of reading The Bible, and you realise that there's a vast - once I was introduced to Shakespeare, I realised they spoke in the same language.
(pp. 46-47)

When I came here and I went to Crawford Primary School in Camberwell, I forgot what they were doing, I'd done already, and so I had a good year of doing nothing really! ...

Then the school I wanted to go to was Peckham Manor School, where I had a friend.... And the reason I wanted to go to that school is (1) the street we lived in at the time, just

off Coldharbour Lane, Southall Road, in Camberwell, there was an older black boy there, who was a friend of our family – it was the only other black family in the street – and he went to Peckham, and I wanted to go to Peckham! That's the only reason I went there! (LAUGHS)

I think that was a Godsend, because the Headmaster at that school, Matthews, had this notion that - it was part of the comprehensive innovation - that kids, any part of London, can do as well as kids in any other place, provided they're given the opportunity. So a number of the kids who went to the school had passed their 11+, but instead of going to Archbishop Tennyson School in The Oval, or to Wilson Grammar School in Camberwell, they went to that school. But they were still streamed. In each year, up to the third year, they had eight different classes or streams.

I was in what they called the "technical stream", technical stream where, basically, you do things like woodwork, metalwork, technical drawing and so on, and the idea was that you would leave school, and if you were lucky, you would go into things like an architect's office, or you'd go off to a factory. There was another stream below us who would go off to the factories. Then there was a stream of three classes above, whom they taught foreign languages to, etc., etc., and they would go off to university. And each year, depending upon your performance, you could move up or down.

My outstanding subjects used to be religious studies, history, geography and so on. But, typically – and I still have my reports from those days – typically, in term time, I would be bottom, but in the exams I would be at the top. And they were very angry with me! Naturally! "If you can do the exam, why can't you do it in the term?" And it wasn't until the fourth year, when we were now streamed for 'O' Levels, that we were given a test, which was given both to the fifth and the fourth year, after one term of teaching in Modern History. The essay was on Lenin, and one day they announced in the assembly, that the top essay for the piece on Lenin was written by me – and I was a fourth year, better than the fifth year. And the chap who was teaching us was just completely taken aback. So he took me aside and said, "Well, if you can do this, why are you in this class?" And I said, "I don't know." But the point is, I knew I could do whatever I wanted to do. An understanding of the system was not there.

Anyway, this particular teacher, and we're still good friends – Fred Murphy – he is an Etonian. He went to Eton, he had a Double First in Classics at Cambridge, and then as part of this whole innovation in comprehensive education, he came to Peckham to teach. Obviously, a person like that, seeing someone whom he thinks has a mind, had a positive interest. And he's had a lasting influence on me, in all kinds of ways. I think more than any of my university lecturers, again, whom a number of them have had quite an impact on me.

I'm thinking in terms of learning, in terms of interest in things. Once Fred Murphy realised that I [had this] profound religious thing, he was the one who introduced me, for example, to Tillich, to Robinson and others, and said, "Look, broaden your mind, read some of these". He put me in for "S" Level history, and introduced me to Friedrich Hegel, and to - I'm just re-reading at the moment - *The Decline and Fall*, Gibbon. And to Tolstoy, and to Isaiah Berlin, and in terms of literature also, to a number of ancient writings, to Thucidides, and the fathers of the founding of history.

So that's how I went to university, particularly through this training for the "S" Level. You're taken through a whole range of stuff. And the skill of writing - he said, "Look, you know, if you can't write an essay, you're not going to get anywhere". And so he drilled me through this. He, himself, sometimes in history classes, he would sometimes set an essay, for which he would also write one. The same question. And then we'd go through each together.

Nowadays, teaching at university, I find that you can't do that with your students, and I think, "How on earth do they learn?" The patience that someone like Fred Murphy had with me, to learn, without that sort of nurturing and culturing, it's very difficult. And so it's in those ways. He introduced me to the theatre, we'd go off to the [theatre], he would ensure that I'd go and see certain plays, concerts, etc.. And in that way, broadened an horizon which was not part of one's background.
(pp. 42-45)

11: University of Lancaster and Michael Heale: politics and vocation

[Towards the end of school] one began to realise there was a wider world still. And it wasn't, however, until I got to university, and we began to learn about more of this, and this is why I think I did badly, as well, as an undergraduate. I did badly in terms of my subjects. Because all my teachers, both at university and at school, assumed that I would get a brilliant First, which I didn't, because most of the reading I did as an undergraduate was to do with Africa, which I wasn't studying formally, and Black America, and some stuff of the Caribbean....

One of my history teachers - once I shifted to history as an undergraduate – Michael Heale a very profound influence on me. He mainly writes on American History, he's an American Historian. ... Michael Heale was particularly good in that he enabled me and helped me to relate some of what I was reading to some of my courses, but much of it was not at all related. So I did an incredible amount of reading and so on, but they were not part of the formal courses that I was doing.

That was a period of self-discovery, in terms of politics and so on. So myself and a couple of others who had gone to school together, and who got to know each other, and were at different universities, we decided that what we would do was to start a new group called "Contemporary Blacks". And then soon after we did that, we got in touch with other people in London, like John La Rose and others, who realised, here was a group of educated black people who knew all about this stuff. So slowly we got pulled into the whole Black Power Movement, and it was from then that one's activism started. And within that, of course, the reading of Marxism....

I went [to Lancaster in] '68, because, remember, I'd missed a year out in school. You see, when I went to Lancaster, I thought, at that time, I began to have an interest in politics in a formal sense, that it would be good to get to Parliament, but it was a very formal, rigid way, and I thought, "Well, student politics would be a good way to start". So within three weeks of being at Lancaster, I got elected as President of the JCR for my College – a collegiate system. And clearly, I was going to be the Head of the Student Union the

following year, in the second year, and I was the student politician of that year. But by the end of the first year, I'd really got into Black Power, and Marxism, and the discussion between the IMG - if you remember those groups - and various Trotskyist groups, and black politics: their view being that colour and race is neither here nor there, it's a class situation, and a number of us arguing, "Well, actually, class is important, but so is race, because of the base on which some people have been oppressed".

So I got very much involved in those kinds of debates, and shifted away from student politics somewhat. By the time I left Lancaster, as a past Student President, they wrote to me to say I ought to be nominated to be a member of Council. And I wrote back to them and said, "Wherever the revolution is is where I am!" ...

Indeed, when I left Lancaster at the end of that period of three years, I was determined to go and join one of two groups – the Black Panthers in Oakland, California, or the MPLA in Southern Africa, against the Portuguese. I was determined to do so. And this is where I was saying that I didn't go to see any Careers Planning Officers, I thought they were a lot of idiots, I just didn't do it. And it was, literally, passing through Peckham and stopping at my old school, and going through this with the then Senior Master, ... he said, to plea to me eventually, he said, "Look, instead of taking these decisions now, of going off to these places which you know nothing about, why don't you come and teach with us? We have this job here. Come here, teach history for the year, and at the end of it, decide what you want to do". This was purely accidental that I didn't go and ruin my life round me!

And during the course of that year, I realised that I was like a fish out of water. I really missed university, because I didn't attend lectures and things like that very much. I didn't even drink very much. I didn't smoke. But I lived in the bars and in the Students Union, and at meetings, and I felt I really missed that environment.

So I then got in touch with Michael, who had always been encouraging me to do a doctorate and said, "Look, you know, I really should do something". He said, "Look, you didn't get your First, you have a good 2:1, which I can understand why you didn't, because you just didn't do the work. But you did a lot of other work. And if you really

want to, you should do it". ... The first choice was to go to Cambridge, but when I met the people at Sussex, I thought this was the place to go to.

It was a sense - not necessarily to become an academic - but just to go and do a piece of work and think about what one will do with one's life. And, of course, even with that finished, I still hadn't thought, really, what I wanted to do. But I did feel very old. I felt I'd lost two years of my life – one as a schoolteacher, and one when I went off to Ireland – and I felt very old, compared to my contemporaries. I was all of two years older than them! So at the grand age of 26, having finished my doctorate, and going off to East Africa, I felt, "Gosh", you know, "I've lived all these years, and what have I done with my life?" I went to East Africa with a great sense of mission, that when I was going to go there, it's a great opportunity to, finally, to live on the continent, learn something about Africa, but with a lot of arrogance and stupidity.
(pp. 45, 67-70)

12: Community activism: alternative schools and black prisoners

During those two years, also, the big issue in Britain was, we were learning, for the first time, that the schools were pumping out a lot of black kids from ESN schools, and I got involved with John la Rose who had published, Bernard Coard, *How the British education system has made the West Indian child educationally subnormal*. And so we took on that task of starting what is now quite popular, what was called the "Alternative School System" of organising Summer Schools. So I think one of the very first Summer Schools organised in London, was one I was involved with in '71 and '72, where we took these kids who were being sent to ESN schools, and we said, "We're going to teach them the three R's, and some black history", which we did. ...

The second big issue I became involved with, and Selina as well, and a couple of other colleagues, at that time, was the question of black prisoners. Prisoners, black people in British prisons, because that started off, at the time, with young people, for youth, but in '72 the police brutality against middle-aged black men also started. So we founded, in Brixton, what was called the "Joshua Francis Defence Committee", I was the Secretary

for that, and one of the main organisers. And there's a number of black groups in London generally, who got together to organise around that. So those were two crucial areas which, in terms of activism, one became very involved in.
(pp. 70-71)

13: Researching the Jamaican Teachers Union

I think you ought to talk about your thesis. Now, that came out as a book eventually, didn't it.

It did, yeah. *Teachers, Education and Politics in Jamaica, 1892-1972* (1988). Very much longer, because once I did my doctorate and went off to East Africa, as I said, I started work in East African politics and abandoned my thesis. I think, because I'd lived with it so intensively for just under three years, once I'd finished it, I was quite happy to draw a line, so to speak. And although a couple of journals in the Caribbean invited me to convert a couple of chapters into articles, which I did, and were published, I never returned to the book at all – to the thesis – until I went to Warwick. They started the Warwick Caribbean Series, and Alastair Hennessy, the editor of the series, had seen my thesis, and, in fact, had invited me to come to Warwick, and asked me why didn't I go back to it and write it up? Because no one had looked at that period. One of my criticisms up to now, about Caribbean historiography, is that the period of slavery is intensively researched, but the period after slavery is relatively neglected, and particularly what I call the "formative years of modern Caribbean society", the period, say, from 1860 to 1960, if you like, taking that century, is relatively neglected.

What I was looking at is very much a paradox which I found when I was reading in general in Caribbean history and contemporary societies. That here was a set of colonies in which some of the cardinal principles of democracy and values about democracy, also emerged at the same time, and within the discussions about under-development, which was occurring in those times, this is a paradox. It really is. I still feel that I've still not done justice to the idea. So I then wanted to look at how this came about, and I wanted to look, first, at Trade Unions, because the Trade Union Movement in the Caribbean, in the

English-speaking Caribbean, started in the 1890s. People like the then young Marcus Garvey, as an artisan in Kingston, was part of that.

But then I discovered that a number of people had looked at these, so I thought, "Well, look at a semi-professional Organisation", and the Jamaica Union of Teachers, of primary school teachers, started in 1892, the formal launch of it. This is interesting, because this is what, within a generation or two of the ending of slavery, the beginning of the educational movement by missionaries, by the Colonial Government in the 1860s, and here, by the 1880s, serious discussions around the interest of schoolteachers, to form a Union to promote their collective interests, and to promote education, because they saw education, similar to the clergy, as a vital route of upward social mobility, and the phrase at the time, "the betterment of the race". And so I became fascinated by that. And, of course, no one had looked at these at all. So I then fashion out this thesis to look at that period and educational development, and the politics involved.

Although it's not in the title, I went back to the 1880s, and there's a wealth of material, of Commissions, of Annual Reports, of the journals started by the Teachers' Union, which is supposed to be the oldest Teachers' Union in the Americas. The debate is to do with the central aspects of colonialism. The authorities, the colonial powers, and particularly the plantocracy, want the children to learn vocational courses, to take vocational courses, to be trained to be agriculturalists, the boys, the girls to be trained to be maids. The teachers argued that, no, education must be about the three R's. If you want to teach them about trades, you do that after school.

Then it turned out that there is a local plantocracy, but Jamaica was, like the North American colonies, had the free assembly system until 1865, when the white local aristocracy asked the British to take it over and run it as a Crown Colony, because they were afraid that the black and the brown classes who were now emerging at the electoral box, would take over from them, so they said, "No, we'd rather be run from Whitehall, rather than locally". But at this point, you see, these are people, now, who are getting an education, and are challenging even that, and, therefore, also getting the vote. And so you get a series of challenges to the establishment, and with Governors from Britain going out there, a number of them very progressive, particularly one called Olivier - who is the

uncle of the great man, the actor – he took on the side, very much, and wrote a number of seminal texts in the period, about the need to develop in that way.

At the same time, there is a shift from the Caribbean, in Britain, to East Asia, to Asia. So Whitehall's not paying too much attention. But, perhaps as the result of an accident, there are now a number of progressive Governors who are being sent out there, who support some of these lines. So we find that in 1892, the Elementary Education Act in Jamaica, established a system of free education up to the age of 12. The big debate was whether it should be compulsory, that they must go. And that it should be the three R's rather than vocational. But post-school education should be thus. And it's in that mainly, again, that you begin to find first generation, really, of politicals, who come after the First World War, are emerging out of that. They have an education, they have a scale, they're not tightly linked into the Church any more, though the schools are still run by the Churches, and so there's another struggle to liberate the schools from the Churches. So it's a fascinating period. So I took this up to the sixties.

When Alastair [Hennessey] asked me to convert it into a book, he said, "Look, we don't want any of your theories in it", because the thesis is full of theories of democracy, and pressure group action, and semi-professional groups. "We just want the historical bit". So I cut out those chapters and simply published it as a history text...

My methodologies were multiple, which I always attempt to [use]. One, the historical records themselves, so I did a lot of work at the PRO and the equivalent in Kingston. All the Parliamentary debates and documents. All the reports from the Government Departments – Education Department there and here. Colindale, the newspaper coverages, both at Colindale and in Jamaica. And so that's sort of the solid documentary aspects. Then, for more contemporary, also, the publications of the Union, which were scattered, and I had to bring them together, because they were in different places. And then thirdly, of course, interviews of leaders and the schoolteachers, many of whom had retired, some of them in Old People's Homes, some of them retired, some who were from this country, retired across Britain. So I did an immense amount of interviews of them. [Fourthly] attending their meetings, and they allowed me to – their Executive Meetings, Regional Conferences etc..

So, and I've always felt that, in that regard, it's important - I've become a little uneasy where pieces are written around one methodology only, rather than backing it up with what they now call "triangulation", to have it from a number of sources. I think that's true, and it comes much more from my history than from social science as such. And one of my dissatisfactions, at the moment, with much social science, particularly at the doctoral level, is that people are being encouraged to say, "Go and do a set of interviews with, say, 10, 15, 20 actors, and write up a thesis". Okay, that's fine. But so what? I think it's important, to use a Jamaican word, to have "backative", to support that with other documentations to make it a much more rounded thing, and that's what I did with that. I was tempted, also, to try to use a kind of a survey for when I was doing my thesis, but I was persuaded that, given what I was doing, it wasn't at all necessary. And I think they were right. I don't think it would have marred the work, and it wouldn't have enriched it in any way.

So you chose the people to interview through networks?

Yes. Since one was looking at it institutionally, of institutions, what I did was I started off with the leadership of the Union extant. Then from that, worked backwards in terms of people whom they could put me in touch with, who had been involved in the leadership issues on educational matters. I then also went to the University and met a number of the professors, two of them, in particular, who had done proximate work, and some of the people they'd interviewed. And they gave me some of their material which they had not used.

(pp. 74, 76-9)

14: Interviewing teachers

My method of interviews, then, because it was done in the tradition of political analysis rather than sociological analysis, so what I would do, we'd set up an interview, they would know what I'm working on generally, that is the teachers and the policies that they, themselves, had been involved with, the various struggles of conditions of work, salaries, training, etc., which they had to discuss with government Ministries and what have you. I would then sit down with them, as we are now, and I would simply - I was not allowed to

record things - I had to take notes. One of the things that was drilled into me, and which I've drilled into others since, is that, invariably, in the exchange in such interviews, face-to-face, in-depth interviews, where you're not recording, and, indeed, even if you are recording, things happen which are not captured, and it's important, therefore, as soon as the interview is finished, to have a notepad, when you go away, it doesn't matter where you are, just stop somewhere as quickly as possible, and write down your impressions – document that as part of the proceedings, so to speak, with proper notation, which you'll need when you come to analysing your data. So my interviews tended to be not as long as, say, sociological interviews where you're talking about a person's experience over a given series of things, and you're taking into view their perceptions. Those interviews would have been very much around particular issues which I would have known something about beforehand. And sometimes, of course, new items would come on board, which I didn't know about, and I could go and investigate these through other sources. And so those were the type of interviews. I think I must have conducted about 25 to 30 such interviews. I'd also interview not only teachers, but also government figures and politicians. The past Ministers of Education, the then current Minister of Education, particularly at those levels, you don't even take notes!
(p. 80)

15: Interviewing politicians

Can you tell me something more about interviewing politicians. Because many people find that particularly difficult. The typical interview technique is based on empathy, isn't it. So how do you get politicians to talk?

Now, that's a tough one! That's a very tough one. I'll illustrate how tough that can be. When I was interviewing a number of leaders of the Khalistan Movement. It's a group in the Punjab who wanted to break away from India, and it was very strong in the late eighties/early nineties, and in Britain I was interviewing some of them. The [leaders] had formed a government in exile – the Khalistan Council. And they used to allow me to come to their meetings, and sit in them, and for my purposes they would speak in English and so forth. And I read their documents, and I was very much amongst them.

But there would be times when you're interviewing a person who had very clear ideas that you disagreed with. But as you say, there is that aspect of empathy, to get things out, to understand what your respondent is saying and so on. And I learnt, I developed a grunt, which meant, "Yes, I can hear what you're saying, but don't think that I agree nor disagree with you", and I find that I still do that now! It's become a habit almost, because in talking to another human being, you can't sit there dumb and totally silent. You must be seen to be engaging, and you must engage authentically and genuinely. But at the same time, what happens, as in a case I was interviewing, not a Khalistani now, well, a person from East Africa, who was expressing some most racist ideas about Africans. And taking for granted that I agreed. Now, you don't want to get into a discussion about your own views about the matter, you want to hear what the person is saying, so either you jeopardise, then, the interview, and call it off, or you listen....

But I think, it's always the case, with politicians' interviews, you're quite right, it is very difficult, because people expect that what they're talking about in political terms, what Weber would call your "demonic position" is the same as theirs, and because you have a sympathetic appearance and face, and you're listening carefully to what they're saying, they just assume that you're part of that process. And there was one instance I recall people wanting me to stand on a platform with them, and to be photographed, again, being incorporated into their mission, into their purposes, and that is, of course, something which I think the researcher has to avoid. The anthropologist would not, the anthropologist would say, "No, it's all part of that picture. It's all part of that, that you are, indeed, within it", there's not the rigidity of interviewer/interviewee. But I think that there are instances, even for them, where there has to be a distinction, and you have to try to find a way, respectfully, ethically, morally, of making the difference and letting them know that, "Okay, I can hear what you're saying. I'll even report you as close to your position as possible, <u>but</u> that's not my position". And that is, that is difficult. If you're looking at a group with which you have a great deal of empathy and sympathy, obviously it's not so difficult. But if you're looking at, say, a right-wing political group, or right-wing politicians, or racists, you're talking to people and they have certain assumptions, sometimes you leave, <u>I</u> leave, feeling terribly insulted and bruised and hurt, and keep thinking, it's one of Eliot's poems where the character says, Prufrock, "I might have said something". You have that feeling that you could have said something, and you know

you want to have said something, but you give the respondent – the other person – the benefit of the doubt, because, after all, the experience is more theirs that you're trying to capture, than your own, and that, I think, perhaps, of a bad situation, is the better position to take.

But there's also the problem, with some politicians, you never get beyond the front. So they might be racist, but they wouldn't say so. So did you have techniques for getting beyond?

Yes. Let's see. I think, since it's always a basis of treating that particular individual, I think I have been successful in getting the person sufficiently relaxed for them to feel that they can say to me what they want to say. I realise, quite often, it's because they think that my physical empathy with them, so to speak, my immediate empathy, goes as far as to their views, though if they were to reflect on that, they would see that it's absurd. But I've not found that it is so difficult for them to say what they want to say to me...

Occasionally, people might have said things to me where I say, "Look, I'm not going to take a note of that". I'll listen to that, but I'm not going to [use it] in any way, because I think one of the things that the researcher has to do is to protect himself/herself, and their publishers, from potential dangers as well. You know if you were to say it, they could sue you, and they would simply say, "Look, we didn't say it", so you don't! ...

But it leads to the view where I remember, in the past, some Caribbean social scientist making the point that the social scientist has to be a novelist also, because you get so much material! (LAUGHS) And that it's only in the novel that you can say it. And if you notice, some politicians now, when they retire, that's what they tend to do, they write a novel, because all they need to do is to have a disclaimer!
(pp. 83-85)

What's the difference, do you think, between interviewing these political leaders, and interviewing ordinary people?

I think as I said last time in our interview, that interviewing political leaders, usually it is worthwhile them knowing what it is that you are doing. You have to be very clear as to what it is you're doing. And you then have to negotiate, so to speak. And sometimes you might go through a gate person who, who controls the access to the persons you want to meet, and so quite a bit of investment has to be done there, in terms of gaining access. (p. 110)

So I feel, in social science research, sometimes you have to grit your teeth and absent your personality, your own inner views, your own values, somewhat aside, and listen, because you're not there to engage in exchange for understanding, necessarily, with the person you're interviewing. There is that, but really you want to get as close as possible to what the person thinks, feels – what they want to say. And that does mean that you're engaging in a different way from when you want to impress on that person your own views. You're there as a listener. And I think, as a listener, you have to almost negate a degree of yourself as a person, as an individual, as a human being almost, so to speak, and just listen carefully. Anything which will interrupt in that process, try and push aside. At the end of it you may feel frustrated, angry, etc., but I think it's part of that exercise. I think Weber expresses, for me, the point very well, in terms of what he talks about our "demonic positions" - in other words, our own personal subjective views. Just set those aside, and try to see the bigger picture, the other story, as clearly as you can, and to relate that and try to understand it as closely as you can in that way. And it's something, not just in social sciences, but in humanities/social sciences as a whole, dealing with people, with societies, and with individuals, we have to try to do.
(pp. 113-14)

16: Tanzania and transnational identity

I'm not sure whether I've got this right, but I have the impression that you went to Tanzania, partly because you wanted to return to Africa, and also as a Socialist ideal. Is that right?

Yes. I think both, really. When I finished my doctorate, I had [four] offers of jobs. One was something in Manchester, which wasn't academic, it was working in a community

based thing, which I didn't particularly want. I was more or less offered a job at the London Business School... and, third, was an offer of both Selina and I to work in Guyana, same Department – the Department of Law and Politics. And the fourth was to Dar-es-Salaam. Walter Rodney had just left Dar-es-Salaam, and we met in London, and he said, "Look, no, man, you must come to Guyana". And I said, "Well, you know, I think I'd like to go to Africa, to have an African experience". Selina wanted to go to Guyana because she knew East Africa, she's from there, and I said, "No, no, come on, we'll go to East Africa".

I think it sprung from, I might not have mentioned earlier, but one of the great figures for me, when I had a political awakening as an undergraduate at Lancaster, was really the figure of Kwame Nkrumah, who used to be one of the few black figures we used to see on television when we were kids, and at that time, we thought he was just a mad nutter, that's how he was portrayed, until those years when I started reading his material. And so the idea of going to Ghana was very much to go to the land of the great Kwame Nkrumah....

So, years later, when I got this post in Dar-es-Salaam, people kindly invited me to come there, I thought, "Well, the struggle for Africa is really in Southern Africa, and the centre of that struggle is Tanzania", because all the diplomatic and the political centre of these things were there, including a lot of the training for armed uprisings. I thought it would be a wonderful experience to go there, by which time I'd started reading Nyerere's works, and so there was no way I was going to let that go by. So that was really the main reason for that – (1) to go to Africa, but I knew that East Africa isn't so much part of our cultural baggage, in the way that West Africa is. West Africa is the important place. But by this time, the pan-Africanist notion, Nkrumah's view, that Africa is one, which is, of course, not true, but it's an ideological position, and so to go there was a great thing. And I'd met people from there who had encouraged me to come there....

And politically, you said earlier that the reality turned out to be disillusioning.

Well, to a large extent. I found that Tanzanian Socialism was really African Nationalism, and I made a distinction clearly between those. And, in any event, it was a kind of nationalism that excludes foreigners…

In East Africa, however, as long as you live there, you are still the foreigner. It comes, of course, out of their struggle against Imperialism and Colonialism. I realise that their struggles, and what they were involved in, were different from my struggles. And Jamaica, in that regard, in terms of those values, is much closer. But again, living in Jamaica, after a while, one realised, too, that without perhaps knowing it, you become more English than you are willing to admit. So that in Jamaica, I was an Englishman. In England, I might be a Jamaican …

What were you in Africa?

I was an Englishman. In fact, I had a humorous letter, which I kept for years! At the end of my first two years there. I used to teach a huge class – Introduction to Political Theory – and at the end of my second year, when my two-year contract's came to an end, I had this letter just before the last lecture, and it went something like this, almost word for word: "We do not want any foreigners in our country to teach us, and we don't want any Imperialist from the Imperialist country. In any event, we don't want an Imperialist with a Mhindi (that meant Indian) wife". And so it went on!

I was completely dumbfounded, because, as a class, we had very good relationships. And I thought, "How best to tackle this?" So I went in and gave my lecture as usual, and then I, at the very end, said, "I just want to thank the person" - or, because it was written in the plural - "the persons who sent me this letter, and I'll just read it to the rest of you. And I know it's not the view of most of you, or, perhaps, the vast majority of you. But I'll just read this aloud". And I did. And then left. And by the time I got to my room, the whole corridor was filled with them! They wanted to see the letter, to see if they could find out who had written it.

It's obviously not typical, in any sense or the stretch of the imagination. But you learn, basically, that people see you as [foreign]. And that lived experience, your lived experience, may be more what you are than what you have in your head, thinking that you are. So for me, the sojourn in Africa, the sojourn in the Caribbean, was of vital importance in coming to terms with who I think I am, and what I am. It does exorcise

that. I'm not worried any more. I'm not caught up in any kind of angst about oneself – in those kinds of ways. Whereas, now, when coming back to Britain, meeting people, talking with them, I realise that they have not had those journeys, and so they - in their imaginations, their heads, and their experiences - they have to struggle with this all the time, and so they're caught up in a real struggle as to who they are, what they are. Are they British, or not British? Are they this, are they that? And so forth and so on.

So what do you say in answer to that question, then?

Well, I think I feel that, in many respects, I am English, or British – the two are not quite the same, obviously – but I am also more than that, in that I feel that I am partly Jamaican. I feel, given my experience, and a reflection on those experiences, that I am, perhaps, a cosmopolite, that I'm something which I feel I can be fairly relaxed within a number of contexts, and what is important to me are a set of values, and those values, in respect of which society I live in, I wouldn't want to force them down anyone's throat, but I'll be prepared to defend them. And that is profoundly a sense of equality of all human beings, a sense of fairness to people, that I don't think anyone is superior to me, I don't think I'm superior to anyone....

I love England, and I love Jamaica! In different ways. There are other places in the world which I like, but I wouldn't say I would particularly give my left hand for, so to speak, and I think the reason for those is because these are places where I've lived...

I'm interested that you didn't include in your identity, being black. Is that deliberate?

No. I know I am black, and I feel that that is important, in the sense that it is a visible thing, but I think I have conditioned myself, very clearly, so that when I see another human being, I do not think of their colour first... I don't even think that that person's going to see me first as black. So I just set it aside. And I think it's deliberate, it's conscious, because I'm aware, when I'm in Jamaica, for example, and you're talking about a third party, people will describe that person in colour terms, very very much so. In India, similarly. And you realise that people, when they look at you, quite often, or

listen to you, they're not necessarily hearing what you're saying. They're seeing you. And that is what is important. ...

And so, I think identity is usually partly self-defined and partly externally defined, and you live on those boundaries, in a way. But I think you live with yourself more in terms of who you think you are, than what others think, and you can't live with what all others think about who and what you are. And I think, if it hadn't been for travelling abroad, living and working abroad, and coming across a variety of situations, and being able to reconcile with these and think through them, then I think I would probably have answered the first thing, "I'm a black man", or that I'm an African.

I met a group of young black people, recently, at a dinner party, and they came out with some shibboleths, so I was a bit bored, so I decided to take on board one or two of these views. I said, "What makes you an African?" And they started, shocked! Shock, horror! I said, "You're not an African at all. You go to Africa now, and you'll find that you're not an African". And I pressed it further. I said, "Even if you go to the West Indies, where your parents are from, you'll find that you're not a West Indian either. They'll see you as something else, but certainly not a West Indian, a Jamaican or Barbadian. So what are you? Who are you?"

Of course, this is very painful in a way, because they've always assumed that they're defined by "something out there", and it's very painful when you observe this, when black Americans are in Africa, and they suddenly realise that, in fact, they're not Africans. Or people from here, in the Caribbean, realise they're not Jamaican, etc.. And this is reality. It doesn't mean that you lose all sense of empathy, all sense of your construction of self in relation to those places, you don't lose those, but you need to be realistic about that, and I think this is where, in terms of research in both spheres, has helped me profoundly.
(pp. 87-92)

17: Marxism in Dar-es-Salaam

By the time I got to Dar-es-Salaam, one was deeply into a more rigorous intellectual Marxism, and there it was very useful, because you had Marxists from East Europe, from

China, from all over the world, from Cuba, Central America, and within Africa, with different intellectual traditions, and wars of liberation going on around you, and a lot of the political leaders you rubbed shoulders with. And no television. Radio for one hour in the morning, half an hour in the evening. One English newspaper! So you have all the time in the world to read! Our house became one of the centres of Reading Groups around Marx, around *Kapital* and so forth, and I shifted my interest from Caribbean, writing on the Caribbean, to writing on – you know, in terms of research – to where I was. And I always feel that where you are, there are things to look at. Looking at African politics, and so then got much more involved in that way....

I am probably of a conservative (small c) bent, and I think partly out of my background and so on, and that ever since returning to university after that year, I think, "Well, I'm never going to be the great revolutionary, but I do want to understand what is it that makes people tick? And what is it that brings about social action on the part of others?" And hence one's interest in Marxism, and, of course, that was the intellectual dominant sway at the time as well. But part of the thing, too, of my reaction partly against Marxism, before the death of this centralised State Socialism in the nineties, was that by the end of my Dar-es-Salaam phase I felt I was coming into a situation which may not have been that dissimilar from when I was under the sway of my mother, and of the Church, namely that people looked at events, at social action, and predetermined causes before understanding those events. And, therefore, that was not intellectually honest. I like Marx, but I might have to say that I'm not a Marxist, because whilst at the same time respecting Marxism, and so for me, a sort of a Leninist distinction from Marxism began to emerge, and certainly also what I saw from Tanzanian Socialism began to point to me that this is not really what I would want to be closely akin to, and reverting into perhaps a more intellectual posture of Marxism, rather than the more practical Leninist-cum-Stalinist development of it.
(pp. 71-73)

18: Ethnic insiders and outsiders

It seems to me very striking that, here you are, you've come to Warwick, in the Centre for Research on Ethnic Relations, and yet this is a world of white people who are doing this research. So how did it feel to you?

Well, not as strange as it would have been for some people, in the sense that I've always taken the view that anybody can study anybody, that racism in Britain, if it's cast in that way, is as much a problem to be tackled by white academics as black academics. In a way, perhaps the burden is more for the white academic. After all, if you want to be crude and say, "Well, you know, who's responsible for this up here?" They are. More so than blacks! Because blacks are victims. So I've never - I looked at it in a broad intellectual way, the divide about black and white academics is something which I've never had any patience with...

In terms of the insider/outsider debate to communities, in terms of research, it cuts both ways, it's a two-edged sword. When I was looking at the Sikhs, for example, the fact that I was an outsider gave me an edge with them, in the sense that I was powerless, whatever I did wasn't going to influence or affect them, whereas I can imagine that a person coming from the Indian subcontinent, working amongst them, they would perhaps have closed the door, because that person, potentially, in terms of how they look at things, might have been able to influence them. So joining them as one of the first black academics, in Britain, to have gone that way, I saw nothing contradictory or weakening, and indeed, in terms of my links with communities, they saw it as a great strength. They saw it as a good thing that I was engaging in that way, and that I was a person, at Warwick, whom they could call upon, they could come and see, if they wished. They drew on that.
(pp. 132-34)

[I recall you speaking at a conference in 1979 on "Oral History and Black History", arguing against another speaker's assertion that only Asians could interview Asians.]

Yeah, that's right. It was a relativism that only Asians can write about Asians, in the way that some black Americans might say, "Only blacks can write about blacks", and taking that kind of perspective. Which, in terms of the engagements that a number of us have

had – or I have had – was an absurdity. And I still think it's an absurdity, that view. But in terms of methodology, you do hear this quite often, people saying that they have a particular advantage from being from the same group as they're looking at. And I often say, "Well, okay, you might have an advantage. You also have a terrible disadvantage. It cuts both ways. Sometimes you have advantage in gaining access and openness, frankness, earnesty, precisely because you're from the outside. Other times, it might be the opposite, but it goes both ways". And in terms of scholarship, we can't restrict it to the politics of empathy, to belongingness to the particular group, and that goes back to what I was saying about the comparative dimension, which does not allow for that. And that meeting [the Manchester Oral History Conference] was interesting.

I've been in similar encounters, before and since. I recall a very progressive Southern African liberator - liberation fighter in the ANC - asking me how can I want to write a book on African politics, when I'm not an African? He, himself, at the time, was just about to write a book on the Feminist Movement!
(p. 97)

19: Return to Jamaica

Crucially it helped me, as I was saying also, earlier on, to sort out one's relationship with the country as such, and with the population, and with the culture, and realise that, in a sense, without any intention when I'd moved away from that, that really, if I were Jamaican at all, it was only in terms of, well, the villages that you're from, not in terms of the broad spectrum of Jamaica.

I used to describe it to Jamaican friends, because we have a lot of good friends there, that middle-class Jamaica is very much a prep school society. It's who you went to school with that matters, and if you didn't go to school there, then you have missed out on a crucial part of the socialisation process, and it's very difficult to angle your way back. I was quite successful in doing so because people are very receptive of me. Indeed, the political party, the PNP – the People's National Party – I became very close to them. They asked me to join, and I said I didn't particularly want to, but we agreed that, provided I never spoke in public for the other party – the JLP – that was fine. ... They had

set up a number of Commissions to reform the Party, thresh out policies for when they came back into office. I served on one on education, and also on the foreign policy one. ... I was happy to serve behind the scenes, and so, for a number of years I did. I even participated, at one point, in the drafting of the equivalent of the response in Parliament to the Finance Minister. They accepted me very much as part of the inner core of the Party, without being a Party member. The present leadership I know quite well, because quite a number of them were also at Mona when I was there, and the Prime Minister, [Patterson] came to Warwick a couple of times when they were still in opposition, whilst I was there, and I met him a number of times. ...

Michael Manley, himself, who was much more around then, was very kind, and I met him several times. … When I got to understand Jamaica more, and what he was doing, I realised that he was a truly remarkable figure, and he really did wrought a revolution in Jamaica... Black Jamaicans were not part of Jamaican society up to that period, and he's seen as a man who betrayed his class, because he's supposed to be part of that upper class. But, in fact, his heart and his policies were very democratic and very much to open the society to all, and I think that's a remarkable achievement.... Michael – Manley the Younger, as I like to call him, from his daddy – as being the pivotal figure in so many, so many respects. His social life was another thing, (LAUGHS) but he was a remarkable man. And very shy. One of the things I observed about him, if you were at a party with him, is that he's a very shy, was a very shy person. You know, he would almost retreat away, and go and stand in a corner on his own, almost. Once he's on a platform, he's an utterly transformed person....

And how did you find living in Kingston?

I found it traumatic in terms of the presumed racist perception of ordinary discourse and social behaviour. I found it traumatic in terms of the violence. I think that I was explaining earlier, that if people are described in racial terms, people are seen in colour terms, the value of the individual is closely akin to what colour they are. So one's own social behaviour was seen, sometimes, as quite absurd.

I'll give you an example. We were looking for a house, and this was before the car we were taking to the country had arrived. Went to this estate agent, told him they were recommended, and the head of the firm put us on to one of his agents. We walked in for an appointment, and this chap said to me, "Dr. Goulbourne, you really want to buy a house?" And I said, "Well, yes. That's why I'm here". It took me a little while to realise what was happening. And he said, "And you don't have a car?" Because he had asked me, "Do you want to drive, or should I drive my car?" And I'd said, "I don't have a car, we'll go in your car". (LAUGHS) And I had Hugh on my shoulder, and Selina was holding Neil, and then [he said] (LAUGHS) "Now, as a black man in Kingston, you shouldn't do that if you want people to respect you! (LAUGHS) You know, to want to buy a house, here you are without a car, and you're carrying your kids!" (LAUGHS)

As an outsider, in a way, it takes time to realise what is happening. But in general terms, that's an absurd example, perhaps, but in just general terms, I remember going to an office to insure that car, and the chap whom I was dealing with was what they call a "high brown man", who refused to deal with me....

The second dimension was, of course, the question of violence, at that time, which always was on your nerves. Because you never quite know when what would seem a perfectly rational situation could just break into irrationality. You can be having a discussion with a person, and you say something which, it's nothing particularly offensive, but they take real offence at that. I used to discover was a lot of schizophrenic characteristics. And, of course, the physical violence in terms of the guns that were available, the drugs, the sense of public disorder...

But, more profoundly, I used to feel that there was an absence in Third World countries, and Jamaica simply epitomised it more than most for me, at the time, a certain degree of cruelty, of uncaring, on the part of the well-to-do, of the rich, with regard to the not well-to-do, and that there was too much of an ostentatious display of wealth, and very little, comparatively, done to help. There weren't enough charitable institutions... We used to find that to be very annoying, where people are so ostentatious about their wealth. If you travel around Kingston, or any part of Jamaica, but particularly the towns and Kingston, you see the sort of ostentatious living that some people display. I think if I lived in that

context and I was very poor, I would morally be justified in wanting to have some for myself!

I felt rather uneasy, and I didn't feel that it's a place that I would necessarily want to bring up my children fully, and yet it's a society in which I wouldn't want to be totally divorced from either.
(pp. 100-104)

20: Ethnicity and Nationalism in post-Imperial Britain

There was a pressure, at the time, from the ESRC, on the Centre [for Research on Ethnic Relations] to produce, because those were the lax days when money came by, and people would just fritter away their time. But I took it seriously that within the first, within those two years, I should produce a book, at least one book, and some articles. So for me, it was a very fruitful period.

The topic I was asked to research on, was to look at new notions of nationalism, which was emerging in Britain. And in that book, *Ethnicity and Nationalism in post-Imperial Britain*, I sought to combine the experience of teaching politics and looking at political movements in Africa and the Caribbean, with looking at what was happening in a Britain which I described, then, as "post-Imperial". I remember there was a book written by Alan Sked, who is one of the main voices in the UK Independence Party, and he opens his book by saying, "There's hardly enough to sustain a discussion about where Britain is going to in the post-Imperial age" – I'm paraphrasing, but basically that was the statement. So I thought, "Well, this is something worth investigating". So my intention, then, was to look at what were the nationalist voices going on in Britain, beyond what Tom Nairn had written about the break-up of Britain. But to look at that in terms of migration, in terms of the post-Imperial moment, and the idea that in the Imperial Age, there is a massive crisis, not only on the part of the post-Colonials. In fact, for them, it's very optimistic, because it's a new life, it's regeneration, a period for creating new myths and so on. But what happens, also, to the post-Imperial power? And to see that this, in the case of Britain, coincided with significant migration from those post-Colonial societies, and to say, "Well, how is this going to be constructed within Britain?" And to demonstrate that

empirically, to look at a number of communities, so to speak, and my interest, then, was to look at nationalist expressions within Britain – the extreme Right. But then there's quite a lot of work done on that, so I thought, "Well, there's not much to add to this".

So you didn't do any fieldwork for the extreme Right?

No. But, but I was tempted to. I was going to tape the views, for example, of Enoch Powell, and it didn't come off for, I don't remember now why. ... But I didn't do many interviews of that regard. What I did, instead, was to interview some of the leaders of the SNP, and of Plaid Cymru, to see how ethnicity, which informed their form of Nationalism, how these were being expressed. And then I wanted to look at a group from the Indian subcontinent, a group from Southern Europe, and one from the Caribbean.

So I focused some attention on the Sikhs, who, at the time, were from Northern India, from Punjab, wanted to break away from India and to form their own state, but Britain was the site of much of their expression of that demand, and that got Britain into trouble with the Indian government. And so I conducted quite a lot of research, listening, interviewing some of their leaders in this country. At the time, it was unsafe to travel to the Punjab, indeed, you had to have a special visa to go there, so I didn't go to the Punjab ...

The other group I looked at was people from Guyana, in this country, and how they responded to these things, and so again, I interviewed a number of those leaders, and the division between people of African, and people of Asian background in that society. This was still the days of Burnham, and to look at how people in this country responded to that. In terms of Southern Europe, I was very keen to look at the Cypriot community, and again, I conducted some interviews there. But not in Cyprus, in this country, using in Britain as a site. ...

I did the interviews, I conducted some historical research, in terms of documentation, collected all the relevant newspapers and publication materials, and within two and a half years, had done the manuscript, done the book. And that came out in the series that the Centre had established with the, with Cambridge University Press.

(pp. 108-110)

21: Participant observation: Sikh Gurdwaras

With the Sikhs, I attended a number of their gurdwaras. I would not dress entirely appropriately, but it was required that you wear a sort of a scarlet headgear, which they'll give you, a kind of a scarf which you would put on the head. You would sit in the same way, you'd eat what they offer, etc., and just be around. So sometimes I would sit around all day, not necessarily talking to anyone other than informally. And what, what would I get from that? I would get a sense of exposure to what people felt was important to themselves. I'd get a sense of the cultural mores.

For example, the Sikhs, more than other South Asians perhaps, feel that they [believe in a] very the strong sense of equality between the sexes. But when you're amongst them in the gurdwaras and so on, you realise that they're just like others, (LAUGHS) they're not that equal! It's, it's dominated by men. It's dominated by men and elders, and women are around, but they're there as helpers – not that different from when you go to some Caribbean church social situations, where again, the men occupy the positions of control and of power, though again, there is a philosophy of total equality. Sometimes, of course, that can change... From the seventies to the eighties, women had, indeed, come to take on leadership positions, and if anything, it was the men who were running around preparing the lunches and the teas and so on. That sort of thing, you can't get that from reading scripts, you can't get that from talking to people, because what they're doing is expressing a view which may be very different from the practice.

So I usually find it important, like in anthropology, to just sit around, and to just listen. And sometimes, in terms of the gurdwaras, I wouldn't understand the language, but, of course, you get a sense of [the social practices].
(pp. 114-15)

22: Group interviews.

Now, the interesting thing there was long long before what we call "focus group discussions" these days, which with New Labour has become in academia as well, one of the main methodological techniques being used. I came across this where I would have an appointment to speak with an individual Sikh leader, say in Derby, or in Leicester, or Birmingham, and I would arrive, and find that, in fact, he was there, yes, but so was a dozen others! And they all wanted to talk! And since I wasn't recording them, it was very difficult, because I'd have to keep those points and try to remember them. So, in a sense, one acted as a kind of chairman, and then took some notes, and on leaving, elaborated on the notes.

So, so it's in that sense that they were there. It wasn't of my choice to have the groups, it was that it was imposed. Of course, as a researcher, you don't turn up somewhere where people are giving up their time, and if it was half a dozen of them, or a dozen of them, simply say "The rest should go", you take what is given! And at that time, I found it very puzzling as to how to treat that, because you can't relate statements to individuals then, and so it's very difficult. You just have to take it as a wrap-around to what was in the news this morning, about education – a wrap-around statement!

But it does help you to understand things better. What that did, I found to be useful also, was that it brought up some contradictions, some different views about common issues amongst themselves, because they wouldn't all express - once they relaxed and start to talk, then you realise that it's not quite as unified, sometimes, as when you're speaking to one person would be. And again, the gender thing, the sex role differentiation came through very strongly there, of the men speaking, women being kept out of the discussions.
(pp. 116-17)

23: Theoretical abstraction or empiricism

I've always, because of one's deeply religious, intense religious background, and having liberated oneself from that, I am very careful to keep away from any sectarianism, to worship any thinker, to genuflect to anyone. I respect people for what they have done, but

not to become prisoner of anyone, and I feel that there is lots of hero-worshipping involved in that sphere of academia, and as a result of it, I shake, and I keep away.

So you mean the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies?

That's right, yes, those sort of folks I keep away from. And if students from those spheres come to me, for research, I usually say, "No, I'm not your man. Go to someone else". One, I hate the idea of hero-worship, that's one thing. Secondly, the idea of talking about things that you don't know about, and you can do it because you do it in such an abstract way, that whatever you say is correct. In the intellectual tradition I feel I belong to, it's just thatyou should make statements which can be proven or disproven, can be proved or disproved. It can take the test of some empirical questioning, and that theory without some empirical evidence is largely a waste of time. Similarly, being buried entirely in an empirical thing where you can't make generalised statements is equally useless. So, I just feel, automatically, a dissonance, a distance from that sort of thinking. I want the interaction, and I feel that that is vitally important.
(p. 131)

24: John Rex

Obviously, at a more subjective personal level, it was painful, irksome, annoying, frustrating, to have some colleagues making statements where it was their prejudices which was speaking, even though they were defending these, or presenting these in terms of objective social science, which it wasn't. A number of my colleagues, like John Rex, and some of the people who are persuaded by his type of approach to social science, was extremely annoying, and had lots of discussions with them, and sometimes just refused to have discussions with them.

But at the same time, you see, as much as one had that with John, I learnt a lot from him, because, as an intellectual mind, he's got an incredible mind, in terms of complex ideas. He can explain them very simply and very clearly, and some writers, whom I wasn't aware of before, in discussions with him, I've gone on to follow up some of those. I remember having a discussion with John, for example, about culture, and how cultures

change when they meet. And he said, "Well, have you read Malinowski's *Concept of Culture Contact and Culture Change*?" And I said, "No". So he said, "Well, here are some to go and read". And I did. And I benefited immensely from that, which I find to be much more enriching than discussions about hybridity, for example, in cultural studies. People writing in that way haven't read some of the masters, I feel, in terms of culture and anthropology, which would do them a lot of good to read.

Or, thinking in terms of the position of value, what Myrdal calls "value", and, to an extent, Weber also, in social science, the relation between subjectivity and objectivity, and again discussing sort of an issue like that with John. It was he who introduced me to an aspect of Weber and Myrdal, and I went back to look at those, and I valued those very much.

But when it comes to talking about, for example, black or Asian communities in this country, he's up the wall! (LAUGHS) You know, he really is! (LAUGHS) And he's a figure who, of course, as I've always described him, he's an intellectual pugilist! (LAUGHS) We've had relations where, um, he's more or less said to me, "Look, I'm going to take you to court". And he ran me from his room, and said, "Get out of here!" And the following day when I saw him coming out of the car park, I ignored him, and that made him absolutely livid. He said, "You're ill-mannered," this and that, and he then went to see the Director of the Centre, to complain about me. We've had all that. At the same time, I think we have a certain degree of respect for each other...

One of the areas of discussions we used to have was about a genre of literature that stresses that black people in Britain, Caribbean people in Britain, are hostile to British society. Now, this is a central theme in one of John's books. [Caribbeans are] hostile, they wish to be distanced from. Now, I take the opposite position. Whereas Asians, he argue, are people who are accommodating and want to be part of the system, etc., etc.. I said, "Well" - and this was in the eighties, long before the Rushdie Affair, long before Al Queda and all these issues. That was the position. I said, "Look, John, if you understand Caribbean people, you will have realised that, fundamentally, they are, if anything, integrationists, wishing to engage and to belong. That we pose no, no threat in terms of cultural dynamics. Indeed, what we express in cultural terms is what becomes part of the

norm. It's not distanced from. It may be it's adding to it, but it's not away from". We participate in sports, we participate in music and literature, in all those areas, and it's built on a foundation which is, to a large extent, largely European. So in terms of the broad spectrum of cultural baggage that we have, is not that far removed. I said, "Look, I don't want to make comments about Asian communities, apart from those whom I've studied, I don't want to make a broad statement, but if you were to, you could find dimensions where, in terms of the integrative process, it is not as proximate as in terms of Caribbeans". I said, "Well, look at marriage, at the family, you will find that whilst some Asians" – I'm not saying this is true now, I'm talking about then, in the eighties - whilst some Asians may be intermarried with the white majority community, it tends to be very much of the upper class, upper/middle class element, but we're talking now about the masses of people, at working-class, ordinary street, street level. You don't find that. What you find there with Caribbeans, they totally intermix at that level. Of course, empirically, now you can show that to be the case. So we had those kind of differences...

I think what it really was is that, perhaps he felt that Caribbean people didn't quite appreciate, fully, that his heart, as a person, was with them. Sometimes, of course, John would make the point that he is black, or is partly black, because a great forbear of his was a black woman from Madagascar. I don't know if you know the story of his family line? So there were those sort of things. But I think that he's a very personalised person. He will personalise things very much, and if you argue against an argument, you're not arguing just against an argument, you're arguing against a person, in his case.
(pp. 133-35)

25: Racism in academia

I found that in terms of employment, it cuts both ways. I've had a lot of great opportunities, and I've had occasions - and I suppose one of the places where I've had occasion where I think my career was frustrated, was at Warwick. ...

If I were to tell my story in terms of how I feel I've been discriminated against at Warwick, it would blow the mind of a lot of people. But that, you live with, and you can cope with. But it's really the imprisonment of the person, of the mind, of the spirit, through racism. ...

Because, Warwick, I think I would have been the first person who, who's black, whom they would have had at that level. There have been a number of Asians, but even to now, I don't know if they've appointed any. Certainly the impression I always had from the academics – not the academics so much, but the administrative leadership in the place – was one of total disrespect. One had to be psychologically strong, I feel, to withstand that.

So how does that disrespect show, then?

Well, in terms of your work, as to the contribution you have made, and not to recognise that. If you say things at meetings which is contrary to what they want, then who on earth are you, to say that? And what I have to remind myself is that I had been, I'd seen the [process] at the University of the West Indies in that I was a Dean of a Faculty, so I understand university administration, mm? I happened to have had comparative experience in different institutions, and I don't think I was arrogant about it in terms of saying, "Well, I've had that experience already."

But basically, I think, in retrospect, looking back, I think there was a sense that if your experiences from outside of Britain is not quite the same as if it had been here. I think some of that has changed now, but there was a strong sense of that at one time. In a sense, you see, I've had to reconstruct my career, almost entirely, since coming back here. (pp. 134, 142-3)

26: Paying interviewees?

Island Associations, school groups, sometimes Church groups. I also entered through Church leaders whom I knew in the country, because, again, you can go to their Groups and talk with them, and ask for volunteers. So in those ways, then, I was able to access various groups. I had some incredible discussions with them, where they would quiz me about the value of this kind of work. "Why are you doing it?" What will they gain? ... How will it help them, how will it benefit them? Only in one instance did a person ask

about payment, how much will we pay? There must be a pay. So we had to then explain that it's not a part of the tradition of social science to pay your respondents!

Would you actually never give any money?

Well, since those years, I have had discussions with colleagues in the Caribbean and North America, and they said that they have started to do that. It still seems to me, instinctively wrong, that you should pay, because it seems to corrupt the system. But again, in this country, too, it's coming on board. I've looked at research applications, when I'm refereeing for some bodies, and I notice that they factor for that. Particularly for focus groups discussion, they will actually say how much they'll pay for each participant. So that is changing. But it still seems to me a bit awkward. ... I think in some, nowadays you have to pay, but I've still not yet designed a research project in which I have factored for payment to respondents.

I just think, in the situation in the Caribbean, that sometimes people are so poor, they've got so little money, and then they give you half a day. You have money. Maybe one doesn't make a bargain, "I'm going to pay you so and so if you talk with me." [But it seems hard] not to give them something at the end.

Yeah... Here too, with one of our present projects, I was in touch with a local community group, and again, one of their first questions was how much will we pay? And I had to say, "Well, we don't pay", and so the negotiations disappeared. Though with another researcher who's working on Asians, Punjabis and Goans in East London, and one of the groups where she goes to, deals with elderly folks, they want her to help, in terms of being a help around the place, and then she can collect her data, and I supported that, which involves two items of expenditure – one, that she should be trained, which is a couple of days, and we have to pay for that; secondly, that in doing the work, she should have a helper, which is part of their practice, and we have to pay that person, which is not a lot. So I find myself discussing and agreeing with other colleagues in the team as a whole, that we will set aside a small amount for those kinds of items...

After all, the story is told of Lucy Mair the anthropologist, when she would do work on Papua New Guinea, in the twenties, that in that society, for you to be seen to be worth anything at all, you have to be the proud owner of a pig. So that she always had, as one of the items in her budget, the price of a pig, because when she turned up at Port Moresby, it's not good just coming with all your luggage and your earthly possessions, if you don't own a pig. You must have a pig. Then people will accept you because you're a worthwhile person. (LAUGHS)

So similarly, it may well be that sometimes you need to do that. In Jamaica I sometimes find, well, my research in Jamaica is usually amongst, not poor people, so that doesn't happen. But as a visitor to any Third World context, it's always important to have a gift, and that gift can take different forms, such as, you've had a discussion with some people, and there is a bar nearby, you go and have a drink, and you pay for everyone, that sort of thing. So that it's seen that you're not mean. But in the more formal sense of payment, as I say, I suspect it will become, as part of the research process, is going to become part of the accounting.
(pp. 155, 157-8)