

## FORUM

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## Citizenship, Immigration and Race Relations in Lambeth Palace Library Archives

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Lambeth Palace Library's primary function is to preserve the records of the Church of England, but there are ample opportunities for researchers to use these archives to better understand Britain's histories of citizenship, race relations, and migration in the twentieth century. Lambeth Palace Library (LPL) houses documents on projects on race relations undertaken by the British Council of Churches and the Church of England's Board of Social Responsibility's Race and Community Relations Committee, as well as Archbishop Michael Ramsey's correspondence from his tenure as Chair of the National Committee of Commonwealth Immigrants. These papers attest to the Church of England's significant role in urgent national debates on migrant rights and race equality, and the work of organisations representing the interests of Commonwealth migrants as they actively sought the support of church leaders in their campaigns. LPL collections reveal the important place British churches had in building networks, providing funding and supplying resources to support anti-racist organisations, and the ways ideas of Britishness were contested in the 1960s and 1970s around the passage of the Commonwealth Immigrants Acts and Race Relations Acts. Papers in LPL collections can also be used to critically examine post-imperial formations of Whiteness, xenophobia and the racialisation of British citizenship.

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Religious archives serve as important repositories not only of the spiritual, theological and organisational history of a religious community within a nation or locality; the records that they house also preserve key aspects of social, cultural, political and intellectual history. Lambeth Palace Library's primary aim and purpose is to preserve the records and papers of the Church of England, but there are ample opportunities for researchers to make use of these religious archives to better understand Britain's histories of migration, race, and decolonisation in the twentieth century. For example, the papers of Michael Ramsey, who served as Archbishop of Canterbury from 1961 to 1974, include correspondence and documents related to his work as Chair of the National Committee of Commonwealth Immigrants, a post he was appointed to by Prime Minister Harold Wilson in 1965.<sup>1</sup> Ramsey's papers include volumes of correspondence from private individuals and a constellation of campaigning and political organisations in response to his votes against the passage of the

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1. Lambeth Palace Library, Ramsey 69; Lambeth Palace Library, Ramsey 75; Lambeth Palace Library, Ramsey 79; Lambeth Palace Library, Ramsey 95; Lambeth Palace Library, Ramsey 129.

Commonwealth Immigration Acts, legislation which fundamentally altered the terms of British citizenship, and continues to impact the way Britishness is thought of and conceived in the present day. Lambeth Palace Library (LPL) also houses papers that document projects on race relations undertaken by the British Council of Churches and the Church of England's Board of Social Responsibility's Race and Community Relations Committee.<sup>2</sup> These papers attest to the Church of England's significant role as a participant in urgent national and post-imperial debates on migrant rights and race equality, and document the work of organisations representing the interests of Commonwealth migrants as they actively sought the support and endorsement of church leaders in their campaigns to underline the moral necessity of their cause. However, there are significant limitations to consider when making use of religious archives to research and investigate the histories of race, migration and belonging in twentieth century Britain. Black and Asian voices, where they appear, are situated in the context of an archive that primarily documents the work and activities of White authorities and organisations. This invites an opportunity to read between and against the structures that have shaped the LPL collection, using practices and methods inspired by scholars who research and write histories of the African diaspora in Europe and North America.<sup>3</sup>

As John Maiden has observed in his study of Black Majority Churches and ecumenical multiculturalism in 1970s Britain, the place of Christianity and Christian churches in the history of British race relations is an area of historical inquiry that is still developing.<sup>4</sup> The historiography of British religious change in the late twentieth century has largely been fixated with questions of secularisation and decline in recent decades.<sup>5</sup> This major trend in historical scholarship echoes "a dominant narrative of severe decline" in the writers of Christian writers and intellectuals from the 1960s, which have been closely examined by Sam Brewitt-Taylor.<sup>6</sup> In recent years, there have been greater efforts to look past the question of trends in church attendance or debates about the degree to which British people believed without belonging — or rejected religion outright — in order to examine the myriad ways that religion (in a variety of forms) impacted British public life. Philip Williamson and Matthew Grimley's edited collection on *The Church of England and British Politics since 1900* examines this question in a number of ways.<sup>7</sup> On the question of the role of Christian churches in the politics of race relations, Tank Green has found active engagement by Methodist churches in the politics of race and race relations in Notting Hill.<sup>8</sup> Camilla Schofield and Ben Jones's analysis of community activism in Notting Hill after the 1958 race riots also emphasises the place of Methodist organisations in anti-racist community activism.<sup>9</sup> But the place of religious belief and religious

2. Lambeth Palace Library, BCC/DCA/CRRU/7/3/5; Lambeth Palace Library BCC/DCA/CRRU/7/5/38; Lambeth Palace Library DCA/CRRU/10/2/35; Lambeth Palace Library, BSR/RACE/ART/3; Lambeth Palace Library, BSR/RACE/EXT/3; Lambeth Palace Library, BSR/RACE/T4.

3. Tina Campt, *Image Matters: Archive, Photography and the African Diaspora* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012); Saidiya Hartman, *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments: Intimate Histories of Riotous Black Girls, Troublesome Women and Queer Radicals* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2019).

4. John Maiden, "Race, Black Majority Churches and the Rise of Ecumenical Multiculturalism in the 1970s," *Twentieth Century British History*, 30, no. 4 (2019).

5. Callum Brown, *The Death of Christian Britain* (London: Routledge, 2001); Hugh McLeod, *Religious Crisis of the 1960s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Clive Field, *Secularisation in the Long 1960s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

6. Sam Brewitt-Taylor, *Christian Radicalism in the Church of England: The Invention of the British Sixties, 1957–1970* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

7. Tom Rodger, Philip Williamson and Matthew Grimley (Eds), *Church of England and British Politics Since 1900* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2020).

8. Tank Green, "Digging at Roots and Tugging at Branches: Christians and Race Relations in the Sixties" (PhD thesis, University of Exeter, 2016).

9. Camilla Schofield and Ben Jones, "Whatever Community Is, This Is Not It: Notting Hill and the Reconstruction of 'Race' in Britain after 1958," *Journal of British Studies*, 58, no. 1 (January 2019), pp. 142–173.

organisations has been largely absent from the historiography of British anti-racism and Commonwealth migration. Historians who have made outstanding contributions to the history of anti-racism and Black radical traditions in the late twentieth century, including Kennetta Hammond Perry, Rob Waters and Hakim Adi, have provided scholars with an essential foundation for understanding these histories, but their studies have not yet explored the major place that religion and faith communities have had in the formation of radical, anti-colonial, anti-racist and Black liberation politics.<sup>10</sup> This has been a major omission; recognising the place of religion in this history brings new vital transnational connections into visibility, showing us how these political movements were made, supported, and, in some cases, financed.

In the case of the Church of England, there has not yet been a major study of the role played by Church leaders in national debates about immigration, the Commonwealth Immigration Acts which fundamentally altered the terms of British citizenship, and the Race Relations Acts. The place of the Church of England (C of E) in these debates is unique among Britain's religious communities because of the C of E's enduring constitutional role in the British state. The 26 Lords Spiritual, the senior diocesan Bishops serving in the House of Lords, regularly commented and participated in national policy-making debates about immigration, nationality, race and citizenship in the twentieth century. Much like anti-racist activists in the US in the 1960s, pressure groups advocating for race equality tried to make alliances with established church figures to encourage them to speak on the morality or immorality of shifting Government policies on immigration and racial discrimination using tenets from the social gospel. While some Church of England leaders supported restrictive controls on migration and the denial of civil liberties to Britons racialised as "coloured," others took active part in movements and organisations advocating for race equality.<sup>11</sup>

### Using Archbishops' Papers to Investigate Histories of Race, Citizenship and Migration

Archbishops' papers at Lambeth Palace Library in the twentieth century have been carefully assembled into leather-bound, page marked volumes that include correspondence and papers related to their work. The medium of the bound volume of chronologically assembled letters and the physicality of the archive collection allows for the possibility of making unexpected connections, or observing sequences and patterns in correspondence. The enormous amount of correspondence from members of the public, civil society organisations, local government and church leaders that Archbishop Michael Ramsey received in the 1960s connected to the Race Relations Acts and the Commonwealth Immigrants Acts is incredibly useful for historians as a source to analyse the tenor, content and nature of public debate on migration, citizenship and race. The correspondence Ramsey received connected to the Commonwealth Immigrants Act of 1968, also known as the Kenyan Asians Act, is particularly significant in this regard. Nearly 200 letters fill a complete bound volume, and sit in the archive under the name "Ramsey 130."<sup>12</sup> This correspondence is notable not only because of its sheer volume, but also its intensity. It includes letters and telegrams from groups representing the rights of immigrants, as well as letters of

10. Kennetta Hammond Perry, *London is the Place for Me: Black Britons, Citizenship and the Politics of Race* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016); Rob Waters, *Thinking Black: Britain, 1964–1985* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2018); Hakim Adi, *African and Caribbean People in Britain* (London: Penguin, 2022).

11. Hannah Elias, "John Collins, Martin Luther King, Jr and Transnational Networks of Protest and Resistance in the Church of England during the 1960s" in *Church of England and British Politics Since 1900*, ed. Tom Rodger, Philip Williamson and Matthew Grimley.

12. Lambeth Palace Library, Ramsey 130.

support from politicians or church leaders endorsing Ramsey's statements against the bill in Parliament, describing the proposed legislation as unchristian or amoral. It also includes angry letters from fascist groups, xenophobic churchgoers, and religious groups opposed to the Bill, who wrote appealing to Ramsey to support the government. Early in 1968, the letters are full of agitation to try and persuade Ramsey to take a particular stance; later in 1968 they are congratulatory or condemnatory.

The Commonwealth Immigrants Act of 1968 was an exercise in reifying and policing racially defined boundaries for British citizenship, and denying the pre-existing citizenship rights of British passport holders of Asian-descent living in newly independent Kenya. It was an extension of the Commonwealth Immigrants Act of 1962, which denied British passport holders and British citizens across the Commonwealth the right of automatic entry to the UK, which had been a protected right of all "Citizens of the United Kingdom and Colonies" (CUKC) assured by the British Nationality Act of 1948.<sup>13</sup> No longer were citizens of the British colonies and Commonwealth automatically granted the full rights of a British citizen. The legislation passed in an atmosphere of heightened xenophobia, amidst debates about migration and race which, as Bill Schwarz has observed, did the work of "reracialising the metropolis," creating "a politics of great emotional charge" concerned with the creating and preserving white hegemony and authority.<sup>14</sup> Debate about the citizenship of Kenyan Asians ignited in 1967. Following Kenya's Independence Act of 1963, South Asians resident in Kenya were offered a choice between Kenyan and British citizenship, though this offer was originally intended for white settlers.<sup>15</sup> The South Asian community in Kenya numbered approximately 200,000, and between October 1967 and March 1968 "33,000 Kenyan South Asian British Citizens left Kenya for Britain — around 18 per cent of the community."<sup>16</sup> This sparked an immigration debate in British politics and the press that was frenzied in its language, tone and urgency. Race was certainly a subject of deeply contested debate in Britain in 1968; not only was it the year of Enoch Powell's notorious "Rivers of Blood" speech which "cohered a vision of racial whiteness"<sup>17</sup> in Britain, but it was also the United Nations year of Human Rights, one dedicated to celebrating and affirming dignity and equality for all. According to *The Observer*, 70 per cent of its reading public wanted increased controls on migration to Britain; but plans to block non-white citizens from access to Britain, by Home Secretary James Callaghan's own admission, would leave thousands with "no more than a husk of citizenship," rendering them virtually if not officially stateless.<sup>18</sup>

Ramsey's correspondence on the 1968 Commonwealth Immigrants Act provides historians with a portrait of the complexity of public opinion on the proposed bill and eventual legislation. Ramsey, then chair of the National Committee for Commonwealth Immigrants (NCCI), held a press conference in February 1968 denouncing the terms of the Act, arguing, "It involves the country in breaking its word. That is very wrong indeed."<sup>19</sup> Ramsey and the NCCI also objected to the terms of the Act, which they argued would mean "racial classification would be embodied in British law for the first time."<sup>20</sup> The letters he received in response to his role in the politics of race relations reveal both the active networks of organisations working to support the rights of migrants to the UK, and the

13. Perry, p. 49 and Chapter 6; Ian Sanjay Patel, *We're Here Because You Were There: Immigration and the End of Empire* (London: Verso, 2021), p. 80.

14. Bill Schwarz, *White Man's World: Memories of Empire*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 31.

15. Patel, p. 82.

16. Patel, p. 83.

17. Schwarz, p.11.

18. Patel, p. 84.

19. "Primate says legislation is wrong," *The Times*, 28 February 1968, p.1.

20. "Primate says legislation is wrong," *The Times*, 28 February 1968, p.1.

racialised politics of grievance and malcontent that animated white supremacist thought and opposed this work. It also reveals a wide divergence in opinion within the Church of England, both in support of and against the Commonwealth Immigrants Act and Race Relations legislation. The correspondence contains many letters of support from members of the clergy and ecumenical organisations. For example, The Revd H.B. Roberts, Editor of the *Derby Diocesan News*, wrote in support of Ramsey's stance, remarking that the Archbishop was likely to "draw fire from some of those who share the prejudices of Alf Garnett." Roberts asserted that he was "against this shameful devaluation of British passports and trustworthiness ... This tragedy should shame the Church into greater efforts for racial reconciliation."<sup>21</sup> Dr C. Kenneth Sansbury, the General Secretary of the British Council of Churches also wrote in support of Ramsey's public stance, with particular concern about the proposed "Grandfather Clause" in the Bill, which could allow the expulsion of a British citizen whose grandfather was not born in the UK.<sup>22</sup> Ramsey also received letters of support from the Council of Christians and Jews, Christian Action, the Society of Saint Francis, the Congregational Church in England and Wales, the Society of Friends, and the Reform Synagogues of Great Britain.<sup>23</sup> But his correspondence also contains letters from members of the Church of England who felt angry at the Archbishop for his vocal support of the rights of British citizens from the Commonwealth, urging him to "leave politics alone" and suggesting "Churches today are half-filled" because of "too much preaching and too little activity in getting down to a vital problem" of immigration.<sup>24</sup> While critics charged Ramsey with entering a terrain where he did not belong, supporters praised the fundamental necessity of moral intervention in matters of state and the politics of belonging.

### The Church of England's Role in the Politics of Migration

The Church of England's role in the politics of immigration was substantial and influential; the Lords Spiritual did not only participate in ceremonial forms of state but also made meaningful contributions to national debate. Tom Rodger's analysis on the Lords Spiritual in the 1970s has demonstrated that Church leaders were a largely "effective parliamentary force, able to complicate and alter the course of debate,"<sup>25</sup> including on matters connected to immigration. While the Church of England and Lords Spiritual took on an active role in debates around immigration, the challenges that they issued did not call for the disruption of power hierarchies embedded in the post-imperial British state. Their advocacy for improved race relations, immigration reform and human rights must be considered in the context of an establishment authority that positioned the Church of England at the top of a hierarchy of religious authorities. David Feldman, writing on British multiculturalism in the 1960s has argued that "the structural feature of pluralism as a facet of British governance is that it has been used to shore up the established disposition of power — English, Anglican and imperial — within the Union and in the Empire."<sup>26</sup> According to Feldman, "the politics of multiculturalism as it is practiced in the UK is doubly conservative. It buttresses the position of an otherwise beleaguered Anglican establishment and at the same

21. LPL, Ramsey 130, f. 88.

22. LPL, Ramsey 130, f. 14.

23. LPL, Ramsey 130, f. 99, f.89, f.61.

24. LPL, Ramsey 130, f. 112, f. 134.

25. Tom Rodger, "Spiritual Authority in a Secular Age: the Lords Spiritual, c. 1950–1980," in *Church of England and British Politics Since 1900*, ed. Tom Rodger, Philip Williamson and Matthew Grimley.

26. David Feldman, "Why the English like Turbans: Multicultural Politics in British History," in *Structures and Transformation in Modern British History*, David Feldman and Jon Lawrence (eds), (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 310.

time it buttresses the position of religious hierarchies and their religious identities within minority communities.”<sup>27</sup> This is an important observation about the ways that English conservatism has, historically, embraced an iteration of multiculturalism that ultimately fortified the establishment’s position within an emergent pluralism, in a model reminiscent of patterns of colonial and imperial domination over subaltern populations. But this conservative pluralism has developed alongside other iterations of English conservatism that have espoused xenophobic logics and focused on demonstrating overt hostility to peoples, ideas, faiths and cultures reified as “other” to a nativist vision of Englishness.

During the late 1960s the Church of England increasingly took on a position as defender of all faiths, and as a voice to support and champion freedom of religious expression and religious tolerance. This stance was not new to the C of E on the national stage: during the Second World War, religious tolerance and pluralism was a key component of the BBC’s religious broadcasting output, and the Central Religious Advisory Committee to the BBC, which included Archbishop William Temple, as well as the Ministry of Information, openly positioned the BBC’s global religious broadcasting as an “ecumenical weapon” which would assert the British Empire’s support for religious freedom of expression as a propagandistic contrast to Nazi Germany.<sup>28</sup> According to Danny Loss, ethnic minorities and “non-Christian religious minorities [used] the C of E as a resource to be mobilised to secure greater recognition for themselves by government officials in support of particular causes.”<sup>29</sup> The Church of England’s political access and establishment position offered a useful structure and platform for activists to emphasise the humanity of migrants and the morality of the cause to protect migrant rights outside of a party-political structure.

In 1962, Ramsey was invited to be a patron of the West Indian Standing Committee (WISC), an influential lobby group that had a strong reputation for effectively championing the rights of Caribbean workers in Britain, and confronting the evils of discrimination in housing, education and employment in the UK. Initially, Ramsey declined the post because of “an insufficient knowledge of the West Indies” and offered instead to connect them to a banker who could help arrange their fundraising.<sup>30</sup> However, the West Indian Standing Committee persisted, and after securing the patronage of the Bishops of London and Southwark and the Moderator of the Free Church Council, Ramsey relented and agreed to serve as patron. The West Indian Standing Committee worked with trade unions, local councils, representatives of political parties and church leaders to advocate for “the integration of West Indians in British society” and to draw attention to matters of racial injustice and instances of discrimination.<sup>31</sup> Securing the participation and involvement of the churches was a key part of their campaign, just as churches served as a significant site of mobilisation for the Civil Rights Movement in the USA.

For Ramsey and the Church of England’s part, the Church secured continued political relevance by contributing to urgent debates on immigration rights and race equality. Church of England leaders participated on national and regional Race Relations and Community Relations boards, and regular committees were convened to discuss racial tension and conflict, with reports delivered from regions across the UK. When, in 1965, Harold Wilson invited Ramsey to chair the UK’s National Council for Commonwealth Immigrants

27. Feldman, p. 310.

28. Hannah Elias, “Radio Religion: War, Faith and the BBC, 1939–1948” (PhD Thesis, McMaster University, 2016).

29. Danny Loss, “The Church of England, Minority Religions and the Making of Religious Pluralism” in *Church of England and British Politics Since 1900*, ed. Tom Rodger, Philip Williamson and Matthew Grimley.

30. Lambeth Palace Library, Ramsey 69, f. 169–84.

31. Lambeth Palace Library, Ramsey 69, f. 169–84.

aimed at monitoring and reporting on the quality of life experienced by commonwealth immigrants and gathering data and expertise on the realities of racism experienced by immigrants, Ramsey welcomed the opportunity to participate directly in one of the most urgent political issues of the day. While there were concerns about the considerable workload such a commitment could demand, Ramsey's staff noted "it must be a very long time since the Archbishop of Canterbury was asked to take on a task of this nature ... [and] it would set a good example to all Christians."<sup>32</sup>

Analysing Ramsey's papers from the 1960s alongside papers from the C of E's Board for Social Responsibility from the 1950s to 1980s, it is possible to see several shifts in the Church's attitude to migrants and the politics of race. Early in the period, there was a greater emphasis on assimilation and a form of "internal colonisation" supported an attitude of missionising to migrants to encourage integration into C of E parishes and church structures. This pattern is in line with wider government attitudes to immigration in the 1960s, including education policies that stressed doctrines of assimilation<sup>33</sup> and the work of a number of charitable organisations that provided a social apparatus to support Commonwealth migrants to assimilate to life in the UK.<sup>34</sup> However, there were significant practical obstacles to total integration, the first being the proliferation of racialism and racial discrimination in many parish ministries. As the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel observed, West Indian migrants, who largely came to this country already adhering to and practicing a Christian faith, did not find a warm welcome in many English churches. As one 1962 report noted: "The English are 'cold' and reserved: [by contrast] the West Indian is friendly, and looks for a warm welcome."<sup>35</sup> Many Black British Christians worked to find or build religious communities outside of the Church of England instead of finding community in the local parish church.

In the 1970s, church affiliated organisations focused on tackling racism by sharing educational tools, and providing funding to resource and support local anti-racist initiatives. The British Council of Churches (BCC) Community and Race Relations Unit (CRRU) was established in 1971, following the passage of another Immigration Act. It became a major educational resource for material on race and racism in British churches, and perhaps even more significantly, had a Projects Fund which quickly established itself "as one of the country's main sources of grant aid to multi-racial projects throughout the country."<sup>36</sup> The BCC CRRU's work was in line with the strategic objectives of the World Council of Churches' Programme to Combat Racism (PCR). At a meeting of the World Council of Churches (WCC) in Canterbury in 1969, the assembly agreed to set up a worldwide programme to combat "institutional racism,"<sup>37</sup> The BCC was criticised by the WCC for the slow implementation of anti-racist programmes within the Church of England, but the funding it provided effectively supported anti-racist campaigns both within and beyond the Church.

The Board for Social Responsibility (BSR) was founded in 1958 as an advisory committee to the Church Assembly, in the same year that "race riots" fuelled by vitriolic white mobs in Nottingham and Notting Hill brought the UK's racial tensions to national and international attention. The BSR's aim was to "to promote and co-ordinate the thought

32. Lambeth Palace Library, Ramsey 75.

33. Heidi Safia Mirza, "A Short History of Race and British Schools: A 75 Year Timeline," *On Education: Journal for Research and Debate*, No. 13 (April 2022). [https://www.oneducation.net/no-13\\_april-2022/a-short-history-of-race-in-british-schools-a-75-year-timeline/](https://www.oneducation.net/no-13_april-2022/a-short-history-of-race-in-british-schools-a-75-year-timeline/) (accessed 6 January 2024).

34. Rob Waters, *Colonised by Humanity: Caribbean London and the Politics of Integration at the End of Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023).

35. Lambeth Palace Library, Ramsey 37.

36. Lambeth Palace Library, BSR/RACE/ART/3, f. 7.

37. Lambeth Palace Library, BSR/RACE/ART/3, f. 8.

and action of the Church in matters affecting family, social and industrial life,” and was an amalgamation of two earlier central Church bodies: the Church of England Moral Welfare Council (MWC) and the Social and Industrial Council (SIC).<sup>38</sup> The BSR was first chaired by Sir John Wolfenden until 1961, with prominent bishops in the Church of England serving as subsequent chairs until the Board was replaced by the “Mission and Public Affairs Division” in 2003. In 1977, the BSR produced two major reports which were debated at the Church of England’s General Synod: “Britain as a multi-racial and multi-cultural society” (GS 328) and “The New Black Presence,” which led to the first major debates on race at Synod.<sup>39</sup> The BSR appointed Revd Kenneth Leech as its first “Race Relations Field Officer” in 1981. Leech was a prominent Christian Socialist and a founder of the Centrepoint, which continues to support young, unhoused people in London. Leech was also an advocate for race equality and contextual theology, who would later serve as a Director of the Runnymede Trust. Lambeth Palace Library’s holdings on the BSR include Leech’s speeches, correspondence and some printed publications created during his tenure as Race Relations Field Officer.<sup>40</sup>

Leech wrote extensively on the presence of racism in Britain in the 1980s, including his 1988 book *Struggle in Babylon: Racism in the Cities and Churches of Britain*.<sup>41</sup> Some of Leech’s written reports and observations on the history of race and racism in the Church of England can be found in the BSR deposits at LPL. On race relations in the Church of England in the 1960s, Leech wrote that “the voices of Anglican racialism were not restrained at this time.”<sup>42</sup> He criticised the openly racist views of a number of Anglican clergymen, including Stephen Pulford, the Rector of Linton in the Diocese of Hereford, who said of Black people in Britain, “Once given equality, they will start bossing us around. We will have Smethwicks, Sharpevilles and Harlems all over the county.”<sup>43</sup> In his report on racism in the Church of England, Leech also cited the example of an Anglican layperson writing in the *Church Times*, “There is no economic, social, moral or political justification for the presence of Coloureds in England.”<sup>44</sup> And, he described the far-right activism of “a well-known Anglo-Catholic clergyman” who advocated for a “Keep Britain White” campaign, called for a racial apartheid in Britain, and had official representatives of the National Front present at a celebration of his ordination.<sup>45</sup>

As “Race Relations Field Officer” for the BSR, Leech was responsible for supporting Church congregations and communities to “make an informed Christian response and contribution to a multi-racial society based on a plurality of cultures and religions.”<sup>46</sup> He was also responsible for promoting the Projects Fund of the BCC CRRU, and helped groups to develop proposals for consideration for funding and support.<sup>47</sup> Providing education and monetary resources was a hallmark of the tangible kinds of support offered by race relations operations within the Church of

38. Lambeth Palace Library, Board of Social Responsibility “Admin History,” available at <https://archives.lambethpalacelibrary.org.uk/CalmView/Record.aspx?src=CalmView.Catalog&id=BSR>. (accessed 6 January 2024).

39. Lambeth Palace Library, BSR/RACE/ART/3, f. 9.

40. Kenneth Leech’s papers are housed in the archive of the Bishopsgate Institute, an example of a religious archive held by a secular institution.

41. Kenneth Leech, *Struggle in Babylon: Racism in the Cities and Churches of Britain*. (London: Sheldon Press. 1988).

42. Lambeth Palace Library, BSR/RACE/ART/3, f. 6.

43. Lambeth Palace Library, BSR/RACE/ART/3, f. 6.

44. Lambeth Palace Library, BSR/RACE/ART/3, f. 6.

45. Lambeth Palace Library, BSR/RACE/ART/3, f. 6.

46. Lambeth Palace Library, BSR/RACE/ART/3, f. 12.

47. Lambeth Palace Library, BSR/RACE/ART/3, f. 12.



England to support anti-racist organising and community development at this time. By providing financial resources to groups organising both within and beyond the Church of England, the Church helped to support the development of creative initiatives and mechanisms of material support that enabled Britain's anti-racist movement.

### **Analysing Anti-racist Activist Networks in Lambeth Palace Library Collections**

The volumes of correspondence in Ramsey's papers and the records of the Social Responsibility Board provide an excellent record of the networks of anti-racist and immigrant groups that worked together against immigration restrictions and to make forms of racial discrimination, including the colour bar, illegal. Volumes connected to Ramsey's work on the NCCI contain papers that reveal mechanics of coalition, and a constellation of active groups working against immigration restrictions. Through his position as Chair, Ramsey regularly made suggestions about membership of the NCCI, and drew from ecumenical networks to do so, as well as the recommendations of church leaders.

While Kennetta Hammond Perry has detailed the coalition of anti-racist groups working to expose the racial politics of immigration controls in the 1960s, particularly in her brilliant book *London is the Place for Me: Black Britons, Citizenship and the Politics of Race*, the papers in the Lambeth Palace Archive reveal that the coalition of unions, workers associations and migrants rights networks that campaigned for improved race relations deliberately intersected with Christian church leaders as a way to draw greater attention to the discrimination faced by migrants, or, in the case of the Commonwealth Immigrants Acts, to encourage the Lords Spiritual to speak against or work to slow down the passage of this legislation through parliament. Indeed, gaining a better understanding of the nature of the connection between religious and civic groups working for improved race relations and the different threads of argument and modes of resistance deployed will enrich our understanding of the way British the anti-racism movement operated as a coalitional movement (Table 1).

Returning to Ramsey's correspondence on the Commonwealth Immigrants Act of 1968, it is possible to read the assembled correspondence as a record of networks. A wide range of national, transnational, local, migrant-centred and student-led organisations can be

Table 1 Selected list of organisations writing in opposition to 1968 Commonwealth Immigrants Act, Lambeth Palace Library, Ramsey 130

The Africa Bureau (f.11)	Movement for Colonial Freedom (f.235)
Birmingham Indian Association (f.52)	National Association of Community Relations Officers (f.84)
Bradford Liberal Club (f.68)	Nava Kala India Socio-Cultural Centre (f.39)
British Caribbean Association (f. 253)	Society for the Protection of Rights of Commonwealth Immigrants (f.241)
British Humanist Association (f.54)	Southwark Council for Community Relations (f.189)
Buckingham Divisional Liberal Association (f.117)	United Kingdom Committee for Human Rights Year 1968 (f.91)
Federal Council of Indian Organisations (f.22)	West Bromwich Council for Community Relations (f.63)
London School of Economics Students' Union (f.78)	West-Indian Standing Committee (f.43)

found in the bound volume of Ramsey's correspondence. The letters sometimes reveal the familiarity of regular collaboration, or display the formal language of first introduction. Some of the organisations speak in similar campaign language, some refer to one another, and some warmly invite future collaboration. Letterheads reveal a spatial network of offices often concentrated in particular areas of London or regions of the UK; a few mastheads contain names of patrons or trustees that can be found echoed on letterheads for other organisations. Taken collectively, the letters reveal the wide variety of organisations that were committed to lobbying against the 1968 legislation, and the array of secular and religious groups that saw the archbishop's public position against the act as a useful political tool to support the rights of Commonwealth migrants.

### **“British Means Who?” Contesting Britishness as a Racialised Category**

Caribbean, African and Asian migrants who came to Britain before 1962 did so with both a legal status as British citizen, and often with an emotional identity as a British subject. People from the Commonwealth who chose to migrate to London often did so because they identified Britain as ‘the mother country’ — having been educated in a school system established by British colonial regimes, the geography and literature of Britain was taught as the geography of “home.”<sup>48</sup> The concept of home was abstracted across the wide geographical reaches of the late British Empire. But on arrival in the UK, migrants faced a country that was increasingly defining Britishness in racial terms.<sup>49</sup>

In 1971, the British Council of Churches' Community and Race Relations Unit voiced strong opposition to the 1971 Immigration Act, which stripped Commonwealth citizens of their pre-existing right to remain in the UK unless they had been in the country for five years. The Community and Race Relations Unit objected to the Bill in explicitly spiritual terms: that it would be harmful to “the well-being of the British nation and the rights of those who live and work in here and have come to seek a future.”<sup>50</sup> They openly challenged the Bill for enforcing a racialised definition of Britishness, and trying to create a society where “people of a different colour and culture are not welcomed for the enrichment they can bring.”<sup>51</sup> The vision of Britishness endorsed by the British Council of Churches was multicultural and inclusive, emphasising the added benefits that robust immigration brought to the UK.

While the CRRU endorsed and attempted to project more inclusive visions of Britishness, organisations affiliated with the Church tried to help migrants as they grappled with the erosion of citizenship rights for Commonwealth migrants, sharing practical information about the ways the shifting categories of British Citizenship would impact legal rights to belong. The archive of the Mothers' Union at LPL contains a folder of brightly coloured pamphlets designed to spread awareness of further changes to citizenship law created by the 1981 Nationality Act.<sup>52</sup> The pamphlets are addressed to “People of the Caribbean,” “British Passport Holders from East Africa,” “Citizens of Pakistan,” and “Citizens of India.” Each of the pamphlets advises that the 1981 Act will formally end the category of “British Subject” and the creation of a new category called “British Overseas Subject.”<sup>53</sup> If a British Overseas Subject resided in Britain for five years, they could then apply for full British citizen. After so many quick changes to citizenship legislation over a span of

48. Perry, p. 56.

49. Stuart Hall with Bill Schwarz, *Familiar Stranger: A Life Between Two Islands* (London: Penguin, 2017), Chapter 7.

50. Lambeth Palace Library, BCC/DCA/CRRU/7/5/38.

51. Lambeth Palace Library, BCC/DCA/CRRU/7/5/38.

52. Lambeth Palace Library, MU/OS/6/109.

53. Lambeth Palace Library, MU/05/006/109.

20 years, it was possible to have several different kinds of British passport within one family. The Mothers' Union pamphlets tried to provide helpful advice to navigate the complexity of the changes. "It is worth thinking about your whole family's citizenship status," the pamphlet advised, concluding, "it is much cheaper for your children to register before they become 18."<sup>54</sup> These pamphlets offered access to legal knowledge to decode the system of eroding citizenship laws, and clarify the steps needed to ensure that recent migrants from Africa, Asia and the Caribbean could claim an enduring home in the UK.

In 1981, the "Action Group on Immigration and Nationality" (AGIN) published a pamphlet simply titled "British Means Who?" AGIN included the British Council of Churches, the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants, the National Council for Civil Liberties, the Catholic Commission for Racial Justice, the Society of Friends Community Relations Committee, the Indian Workers Association, the West Indian Standing Conference, the Standing Conference of Pakistani Organisations and the National Council of Bangladeshi Organisations.<sup>55</sup> The campaign tried to stop or significantly alter the 1981 Nationality Bill, and "restore rights taken away from British Asians in 1968." It opposed the creeping racialisation of British citizenship, which would take on a new dimension in the 1981 Act. From 1981, a person born in the UK would not automatically acquire British citizenship; new-born children could only become citizens if one parent was already a British citizen. The AGIN pamphlet closed with a call for guaranteeing Commonwealth citizens' rights in a new law, "to ensure these cannot be gradually whittled away."<sup>56</sup> Given the increasingly exclusionary legal boundaries set around British citizenship, concern for the continued erosion of citizenship rights was a warranted concern.

### **Whiteness: Critically Examining White Privilege and White Nationalism in LPL Papers**

Among Ramsey's papers it is easy to trace psychologies and pathologies of Whiteness in late-imperial and postcolonial Britain. Whiteness operates in these papers in myriad ways: in the positions of power occupied by an exclusively White church leadership executive, and the ways that decisions about whether to take the experience of migrants seriously and try to address issues of racial injustice are first made in exclusively white environments.<sup>57</sup> It is seen in the conservative pluralism of creating space for religious toleration while maintaining the position of the Church of England as a sort of first among equals — the parliamentary and political defender of faiths. It is seen most explicitly in the racist and xenophobic letters Ramsey received from churchgoers around the country and far right lobby groups, which draw from malicious racial stereotypes to refer to commonwealth workers as unhygienic, lazy, and toxic to British culture. One of the most arresting parts of LPL's collections of papers connected to the history of immigration is its substantial documentary record of "racialist" thinking, particularly in correspondence from MPs, church leaders, White nationalists and self-described "men on the street."

Encountering racial hatred in the archive can be an arresting experience. Racist screeds can be found nestled between pages of rather benign and almost bureaucratic letters, but it is not just their content that is distinctive. The material record of the letters reveals something of their condition. One can see and feel the indentation of angry pen pressing

54. Lambeth Palace Library, MU/05/006/109.

55. Lambeth Palace Library, MU/05/006/109.

56. Lambeth Palace Library, MU/05/006/109.

57. Gloria Wekker, *White Innocence: Paradoxes of Colonialism and Race* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016); see also, Daniel Geary, Camilla Schofield and Jennifer Sutton (eds), *Global White Nationalisms From Apartheid to Trump* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020).

through paper, and tight scripts that feel like they have been written in a balled-up fist.<sup>58</sup> The materiality of the object of the letter in the archive can tell its own story. But the tone of the arguments raised by racists is also revealing: small incidents on city buses (for example: a White woman not getting a seat on a bus while a Commonwealth migrant has already sat down)<sup>59</sup> prompt pages and pages of angry text. These letters reveal something of the psychology of British Whiteness at this time, which continue to shape contemporary racial politics: the denial of the realities of Empire, false understandings of biology steeped in racial hierarchy, and a sense of alienation from British society which is blamed on migrant arrival.<sup>60</sup> A divided “us” and “them.” Descriptions of “no go areas.” Insistence that migrants should “go back where they came from.” Bill Schwarz’s *White Man’s World* has mapped some of the psychology of White nationalism in Britain, while Kehinde Andrews has written of a “psychosis of whiteness” wrapped in imperial denial.<sup>61</sup> These critical approaches are useful for unpicking the toxicity of this hate mail, to place these letters in a larger frame as a manifestation of the logics of colonial Whiteness in the imperial metropolis.

The letters also reveal some of the peculiar logics of racist thinking. At least eight letters that go on to detail racist tropes, use othering language, or condemn the presence of people of colour in British streets or spaces begin their letters by claiming that they are not racist. “I am not a racist ... I am just a ‘man in the street’” begins one letter, and continues, “the immigrants have exploited us, harmed us, robbed us,” and asserts that “coloured people have no morals” and calls any use of social services by Commonwealth migrants “a wicked deception.”<sup>62</sup> The unwillingness to be identified as a racist, while averring and supporting ideas that reify ideas of racial hierarchy and white supremacy, speaks to the insidious ways that British racism can operate. Within the White British racist imaginary, to be identified as a racist is unpalatable, but enshrining racial inequality, demeaning people racialised as other, and enforcing forms of racial segregation is deemed desirable and permissible. Another trope that frequently appears in letters that support racialised migration controls is an appeal to economic concerns. Immigration, and not class inequality or division, is regularly described as the primary cause of Britain’s economic woes. The central metaphor used to depict migration as cause of economic insecurity is the “swarm.”<sup>63</sup> Dehumanising language that renders Black and Asian migrants to be uncivilised frequently appears alongside concerns that “English people” will be “outnumbered” if more migrants arrive.<sup>64</sup> A letter from W. Barton, Group Secretary for the Manchester Group of the English National Party cites the popularity of Enoch Powell, who the writer believes “commands more respect throughout this land today,” and threatens that immigrants arriving to Britain “will be met with the full might of our police forces and armed services.” He writes in expectation of a less tolerant future and sees democracy as a vehicle for realising the goals of ethnic nationalists, concluding his letter, “that is the will of the people and the majority will prevail for that is democracy. No answer is required or wanted to this letter.”<sup>65</sup> Anger, bitterness and resentment characterise the tone, tenor

58. Lambeth Palace Library, Ramsey 130, f. 239.

59. Lambeth Palace Library, Ramsey 130, f. 17.

60. Schwarz, p. 29.

61. Schwarz, pp. 1–32; Kehinde Andrews, “The Psychosis of Whiteness: The Celluloid Hallucinations of Amazing Grace and Belle,” *Journal of Black Studies* (July 2016), pp. 435–453; Kehinde Andrews, *The Psychosis of Whiteness: Surviving the Insanity of a Racist World* (London: Penguin, 2023).

62. Lambeth Palace Library, Ramsey 130, f. 3.

63. Lambeth Palace Library, Ramsey 130, f. 15.

64. Lambeth Palace Library, Ramsey 130, f. 15, 28.

65. Lambeth Palace Library, Ramsey 130, f. 239.

and content of many of the letters written in support of the 1968 Act. Frequently, correspondents in this category express their dismay at the archbishop for using his position as the head of the Church of England to voice support for migrants. That an established symbol of Englishness could be used to support an expansive vision of who belongs in England seems to spark a particular resentment.

### **Black Voices in the Archive: Power and Preservation**

Whose stories have been preserved in the Lambeth Palace Library collections related to race, migration and citizenship, and why? Who does the majority of the speaking, or the writing? And where are the Black and Asian voices in this collection? If these voices are not telling their own history in these pages, who is telling it for them? There is a power and a privilege in being well-documented. As historians, it can be easy to centre the most documented voice in the writing of a history — in this case, Ramsey, or the work of the British Council of Churches, or Ken Leech. An archbishop in the Church of England plays a role of national prominence and significance in their working life, but this role also ensures a well-preserved place in the national story through LPL's careful archiving, documentation and preservation of their life and achievements. But it is essential that we consider ways to read against and beyond the archives of archbishops' papers and official church records to document the experiences of racially minoritised people in the pieces in the archival record.

Black feminist epistemologies and historiographies provide essential instruction on thoughtful practices for researchers seeking to advance understanding of histories of Black lives within an archive, and leading Black feminist scholars have created innovative methodologies to respond to encounters of fragmentation and silencing in archival records. Tina Campt's essential work on the archive, photography and the African diaspora in Europe offers invaluable insights on the intellectual practice of reading against the silences or practices of marginalisation in British and German archives. Campt has written thoughtfully about practices of archival encounter in her work on surviving photographic records from the Dyche Portrait Studio in Birmingham at Birmingham City Library, which houses ten thousand largely unidentified images, including proof prints and negatives.<sup>66</sup> Campt gives particular focus to images in this collection depicting studio portraits of West Indian migrants, copies of which would often be sent to friends and families in the West Indies to show how well life was progressing in new circumstances in the UK.<sup>67</sup> Campt calls the images sites of "diasporic aspirations," often engaged in a respectability politics with visual cues indicating prosperity and decency.<sup>68</sup> She suggests that these images in the archive are not only documenting "practices of social and cultural emancipation" and biographical details, though they lack much contextual information. Most significantly, she argues that taken together as a set of photographic images within the archive, they have an "affective and semiotic capacity."<sup>69</sup> Campt observes within the serial character of this collection in the archive "rhythms, hum and patterns" which she likens to listening to music, and assigns frequencies, volume and sonic registers.<sup>70</sup> Campt's creative and affective reading of the Dyche Portrait Studio collection in the Birmingham City Library Archive provides a method of interpretation that resonate with the experience of reading letters from black and Asian migrant groups and campaigners in Ramsey's letters. These letters, when

66. Campt, p. 29.

67. Campt, pp. 157–8.

68. Campt, p. 155.

69. Campt, p. 196.

70. Campt, p. 197.

read together, reveal the pitch, tone and varying registers of a constellation of anti-racist organisations and activists working in concert for a common cause. Though the UK's anti-racist movement was fragmented between so many grassroots organisations working to represent the interests of particular regions, migrant groups, or trade unionist networks, there are patterns in their ways of working, their letterheads, their organisational structures and the arguments that they marshal to advocate for Commonwealth migrants which can be read through the semiotics of the letter as a site of activist praxis. Though these letters in the LPL collection reveal only a fragmentary piece of an anti-racist organisation's mission, work and legacy, taken together these fragments combine to reveal a dynamic grassroots anti-racist movement, and provide a record of activists, organisations and actions working to dismantle racism in the UK in the 1960s and 1970s.

The work of Saidiya Hartman provides another instructive example regarding the use of archival fragments to realise a much fuller and more complex story about the lived experiences of racially minoritised historical subjects, and of Black women in particular. Hartman's celebrated works, including *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments* and "Venus in Two Acts," advance important critical tools for scholars of the history of the African diaspora in the modern world.<sup>71</sup> Hartman skilfully and adeptly reveals the historical experiences of Black women whose lives and work have been fragmented in the historical record, making visible the historical processes that have silenced certain voices in the archive. Hartman makes use of contextual information, a dedicated practice of finding and re-joining fragments across different archival collections, and creative practices of critically informed discovery to produce compelling historical narratives. Her work provides a model for scholars across disciplines. But for historians of religion making use of religious archives, her work provides an important example of the time-consuming, laborious but necessary work needed for dedicated recovery. The histories of Black and Asian activists and organisers that appear in the LPL collection cannot be told through the context of the religious archive alone, and require a practice of joining up information across a wide range archival collections, and perhaps critically inferring the contexts that activists were working in based on available evidence where archival recovery cannot be achieved. It is also important to consider critically the historic and contemporary practices of archival preservation that have marginalised the work and experiences of Black and Asian people within a collection such as that of Lambeth Palace Library, and to make processes of preservation that have been shaped by conscious or unconscious bias and privilege more visible in scholarly treatments of these historic records.

What can we learn about Black and Asian historical experiences in the LPL collections relating to race, citizenship and migration? There are certainly some important histories in these records that require further analysis and investigation. Wilfred Wood, the C of E's first Black British bishop, who was consecrated as the Bishop of Croydon in 1985 appears in Ramsey's papers on several occasions. In one of his earliest appearances in these papers, he offers an important criticism of the NCCI, one echoed by Black British activists and civil rights campaigners elsewhere: that the NCCI, well-meaning though it may be, was ultimately a toothless organisation with little power to make direct impacts on policy to improve race relations.<sup>72</sup> Writing in 1965, Wood was concerned that the founding of the NCCI revealed a cynical and hypocritical Labour government position: it was perfectly comfortable creating restrictions on

71. Hartman, *Wayward Lives*, Introduction; Saidiya Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts," *Small Axe* 12, no. 2 (2008): 1–14.

72. Lambeth Palace Library Ramsey 95, f. 191.

commonwealth migration, and accepting racialised terms of British citizenship established by the previous Conservative government, and would only concern itself with listing and investigating the worst kinds of housing and employment discrimination without introducing any kind of criminal offence for keeping up the colour bar. Wood was a notable anti-racist campaigner and organiser both within and beyond the Church of England, who also served as the Chairman of the UK's Martin Luther King Foundation and as a Director of the Institute of Race Relations. He has documented his life and writings in his own published works, and records relating to his influential career can be found spread across a number of local or institutional archives across the UK.<sup>73</sup> Records relating to his work in LPL reveal something of his relationship with the Church establishment and his employment history, though these records need to be taken alongside extant records external to LPL to situate his cultural and historical significance as an activist and leader.

Another example: among Ramsey's correspondence around the launch of the NCCI in 1965 is a letter from Pamela Margaret Wylam writing on behalf of the Central Committee of British Sikhs, asking for Ramsey and the NCCI to include Sikh representation on the council, and asking them to affirm a commitment to religious liberty and tolerance for all.<sup>74</sup> There are five letters relating to the Central Committee of British Sikhs in this collection, some of which provide an internal briefing note to Ramsey on who Wylam was — a lecturer and expert on Sikhism who converted to the religion. The papers provide details about the aims and intentions of this group, and the work they undertake on behalf of the Sikh community in Britain. This document is preserved alongside other letters, but the complete papers of this society are elusive. They do not seem to be housed in any local archives across the country, though some of their letters may also appear in the Race Relations collection in West Yorkshire's local archive.<sup>75</sup> Scant traces of this organisation can be found digitally, except the name of the organisation's co-founder: Piara Singh Sambhi, a former president of a Gurdwara in Leeds who passed in 1993. To get at the history of this organisation, it will require a project of excavation and recovery through local and oral histories, relying on the expertise of scholars on the history of British Sikhism. That LPL has a preserved record of their activities is significant, but this highlights a familiar and regular problem when it comes to researching the histories of migrant groups in Britain — a lack of documentary survival, or a lack of financial and physical resources to ensure easy access to archives related to the history of a particular minority group in Britain.

The collections at Lambeth Palace Library related to race relations, citizenship and migration ultimately only capture a partial story. Researchers seeking to understand the rich history of grassroots movements led by Black and Asian British people, which played essential roles in the development and articulation of immigration debates, can only find pieces of those stories in this archive. However, when findings from this collection are put in dialogue with those at the George Padmore Institute, Institute of Race Relations, and the Black Cultural Archives, the important place of religious communities and organisations in wider debates on race equality in Britain comes into view, alongside the history of

73. Wilfred Wood, *Faith for a Glad Fool: The Church of England's First Black Bishop speaks on Racial Justice, Christian Faith, Love and Sacrifice*, (London: New Beacon Books, 2010); Wilfred Wood, *Keep the Faith Baby: A Bishop Speaks on Faith, Evangelism, Race Relations and Community* (Oxford: The Bible Reading Fellowship, 1994).

74. Lambeth Palace Library, Ramsey 75.

75. John Wolffe, "Past and Present, Religious and Secular in Religious Archives," *Journal of Religious History* Special Issue on Religious Archives.

black and Asian led activism and advocacy on matters of race equality. Furthermore, by engaging with methods and practices espoused by scholars dedicated to critically considering the archive as a site for understanding the history of the African diaspora, and paying attention to the patterns, silences, erasures and materiality of the archive, as well as our emotional encounters with it, it is possible to yield new scholarly and affective insights from hard-bound tomes of archbishops' letters and folders of faded colour-copied pamphlets.

### Conclusion

Lambeth Palace Library collections are rich with documents that reveal important facets of the history of the ways the idea of Britishness and British citizenship was contested in the late twentieth century according to a politics of race, identity and shifting discourses of belonging. This is particularly evident in papers related to immigration debates, and campaigns connected to better understanding or improving British race relations. Beyond the papers that evidence Ramsey's individual political role in debates about race and belonging through his participation in the National Council of Commonwealth Immigrants in the 1960s, Lambeth Palace Library archival holdings reveal that the Church of England made substantial institutional commitments to anti-racist politics in the 1970s and 1980s through the work of the British Council of Churches, the Board of Social Responsibility, and the Mothers' Union. There are further areas of the LPL collection that relate to the history of race relations in the late twentieth century in critical ways, which deserve further analysis and attention by historians. These include: Archbishop Robert Runcie's Commission on Urban Priority Areas (1982–6) which considered the legacies and impacts of racial tensions in British cities, and the impact and legacy of their published report *Faith in the City: A Call to Action for Church and Nation* in 1985; and, the work of Archbishop Donald Coggan on matters of race relations, including his public opposition to racialism and discrimination against immigrants in the late 1970s when Margaret Thatcher and the Conservative Party were stoking hostility to migrant communities.<sup>76</sup> The place of the Church of England in national debates about migration is not only a question of historical interest, but one that has significant contemporary relevance. At the time of writing, the Home Office has sought to implement deportation schemes to expel asylum seekers to Rwanda and incarcerate migrants in floating barges, while Archbishop Justin Welby has made several public pronouncements against these Conservative Government proposals, including in the House of Lords.<sup>77</sup> Some Conservative MPs framed Welby's comments as "sharpening political divisions" and caricatured the Archbishop's public interventions as "naïve,"<sup>78</sup> but the records of Lambeth Palace Library show that Welby's comments in opposition to this hostile environment for refugees can be situated in a long history of Archbishops showing public support for politically contested migrant communities.

The Church of England occupies an important place in the political history of Britain; as the established Church of state, it has a privileged position of access to

76. Lambeth Palace Library, GB/109/20054 "Archbishop's Commission on Urban Priority Areas;" Lambeth Palace Library; Coggan 71, ff. 74–146.

77. "Church of England Leader Says a Plan to Send Migrants to Rwanda Undermines the UK's Global Standing," Associated Press, 29 January 2024. <https://apnews.com/article/uk-rwanda-asylum-bill-house-of-lords-e2a609984413d46f7305751b5ada28c9> (Accessed 31 January 2024).

78. "Tory MP accuses Archbishop of 'Wanting to Live with Law-breaking after Rwanda Asylum Criticism,'" *The Independent*, 17 April 2022. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/justin-welby-rwanda-conservative-mp-speech-b2059645.html> (Accessed 31 January 2024).



Westminster's halls of power, and seats within legislative and advisory bodies. Making use of LPL collections not only helps historians make useful additions to the political history of Britain, but actually enables a closer understanding of how key political debates were conducted through moral and ethical terms. It also reveals the important place British churches had in building networks, providing funding and supplying resources to support anti-racist organisations. The LPL collections also provide, through the privilege of their well-resourced preservation, records of organisations and individuals active in anti-racist coalitions and campaigns whose actions have been silenced, marginalised, or obscured within the larger historical record of the twentieth century. Reading the LPL collections on race relations, citizenship and immigration requires a contextual understanding of the wider history of race and belonging in the twentieth century, but by putting these records in dialogue with other local, organisational or national record a fuller picture emerges of this important part of modern British history.

#### *DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT*

The data that support the findings of this study are openly available in Lambeth Palace Library, London, UK.