

“I Thought No One Would Care”: the Windrush scandal and social representations of blackness

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Stories of the deportation and detention of citizens who lived in the United Kingdom for decades, attracted international media attention and developed into the Windrush scandal in April 2018. Those affected had not formalised their status after moving mainly from former British colonies in the Caribbean, as part/children of the Windrush generation, which helped to rebuild after World War II.

This study explores how public figures who escalated the issue in the public domain and naturalised members of the Windrush generation experienced the scandal through media coverage. It includes 14 in-depth interviews and a content analysis of 20 stories on how Blackness was represented in *The Guardian* and *The Telegraph*.

The data revealed that media coverage was a double-edged sword. The stories presented affected members of the Windrush generation as British citizens and meaningful contributors to society. However, ambiguity regarding the

number of affected citizens created a sense that the entire Windrush generation was entangled in the scandal.

The unprecedented shift towards presenting affected Windrush migrants as upstanding citizens broke away from historical representations that link Blackness to criminality, scrounging and other social problems.

Although there was sympathy for those affected and heightened “respect” for the Windrush generation at large, the widescale presentation of victimhood added another layer to consistently stigmatising representations of Blackness.

The research showed the “good” vs “bad” immigrant classification needs a rethink, with keen focus on the damaging effects that can emerge at the personal, collective and institutional levels when these lines become blurred.