## Chapter 1

# Introduction

A mile or so east of Kingston's downtown parade, where Victoria Avenue becomes Windward Road, there is a small dirt track that leads off the main road. Passers-by might not notice the faded sign reading 'Open Arms Drop in Centre', but most Jamaicans will be familiar with the area I am describing. Open Arms is just opposite Bellevue, Jamaica's only psychiatric hospital, and while Bellevue has a long history – first founded as the Jamaica Lunatic Asylum by the British in 1861 – Open Arms opened only in 2006. Open Arms now houses up to 70 homeless men, in two large dormitories and a handful of single rooms, and a significant proportion of the residents are 'deportees' from the UK and North America (I use scare quotes around 'deportee' throughout because the term has some pejorative connotations in the Jamaican context).[1]

I visited Open Arms several times, to meet men who had been deported from the UK. One afternoon as I was leaving the compound, unsatisfied with my interviews and troubled by my observations, I noticed a young man sitting in the shade, at some distance from everyone else, using what looked like a new iPhone. He was holding a portable wireless router and I made some inane comment about Jamaica's lack of data signal. He responded in a distinctly London accent and we had a brief conversation. His name was Devon, and he was wary about speaking with

me. Anyway, he would not be in Jamaica for long, he explained. He had an ongoing immigration appeal in the UK, one that he needed to win so that he could return to his son and his family in London.[2] Devon, who was in his early twenties, explained that he had lived in the UK since he was seven years old. He did not think he could survive in Jamaica, and he told me that if he left Open Arms he would be killed. He sounded paranoid.

I saw Devon again on subsequent visits to Open Arms, but after a few months he was no longer living there. I do not know where he went, but the chance that he is back with his family in London is close to zero. Unfortunately, his story is not unique, not even unusual, and its themes became increasingly familiar as I got to know more deported people in Jamaica.

Open Arms is an unsettling place. On my last visit, in 2017, a group of local men arrived at the gates, threatening to kill two of the residents who had offended them, and promising to return with guns. This was not the first such encounter. On several occasions, men from Open Arms had been robbed of their phones, tablets and money just outside the gates, and the centre had been broken into on three occasions. Several people told me the story of an Open Arms resident who was killed just outside the centre two years earlier, a young man who had also been deported from the UK after spending most of his life there. Open Arms is clearly an extremely difficult place to live, especially for people who have just arrived from the UK, and yet it might be the best option a deported person has.

Open Arms has been partly funded by the UK government, through the aid budget, as part of the 'Rehabilitation and Re-integration Programme'.[3] In return for UK funding, beds at Open Arms are reserved for destitute 'deportees' expelled from the UK. The Home Office then regularly cites the existence of Open Arms to justify further deportations, referring to the homeless shelter in deportation decision letters under 'provisions on return'. In effect, the Home Office deports people to Jamaica

even when it accepts that they have no family or social support on the island. To facilitate this process, the UK government funds small non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to provide 'reintegration services' which can be cited to justify further deportations (see Chapter 8).

However, the vast majority of people deported from the UK to Jamaica do not live in Open Arms on their return. Instead, most return to low-income neighbourhoods like those adjoining Open Arms, often to live with estranged family members. People who have lived in the UK since childhood – whom I provocatively describe as 'Black Britons' – usually have no idea how to navigate these neighbourhoods, and many live in fear of serious violence. For example, one young man I met, Omar, described his vivid and repeated nightmares about being 'shot in the head by gunmen', just like his father had been when he was a child. Ricardo, who features in Chapter 3, was concerned that he would be targeted in Montego Bay, where his brother had been murdered two years earlier. Others told me they had seen people killed 'in front of their eyes', while Chris, who features in Chapter 4, recounted the time when a police officer held a gun to his head in East Kingston.[4] This explains why so many deported people, like Devon, insist that they have to get out of Jamaica. Somehow they have to imagine that it might be possible for them to return to their homes and families in Britain.

I had travelled to Jamaica to meet people in this situation, people who experienced deportation as a kind of banishment. Whether I was prepared for it or not is another question, but I was interested in meeting people who had moved to the UK as children and been deported as adults.

This project began before the outbreak of the 'Windrush scandal' in 2018, when it was discovered that long-settled Caribbean migrants who had moved to the UK before 1973, and who therefore should not have been deportable, had been denied access to public services and in some cases been wrongfully

deported because of the UK's 'hostile environment' immigration policies.[5] The treatment of the 'Windrush generation' caused public outrage, demonstrating that the settled status of 'Black Britons' remained revocable and raising a number of questions about race, citizenship and belonging in 'Brexit Britain'.[6] However, the deported people featured in this book were not from the 'Windrush generation' – they migrated to the UK much later, in the early 2000s and, most importantly, they were all deported following criminal conviction. Indeed, the 'Windrush generation' were explicitly contrasted with 'foreign criminals' in 2019 and 2020, when, in the wake of the 'Windrush scandal', the Home Office sought to reinstate deportations to Jamaica by deporting only those they defined as 'serious foreign criminals', on chartered mass deportation flights.[7]

My focus on people with criminal records, then, is deliberate. In my view, writing about 'foreign criminals' – those archetypal 'bad migrants' – requires more radical and interesting forms of critique. To understand the deportation of people with criminal records, we need to move beyond those liberal accounts that emphasise the victimhood and suffering of particular groups of migrants (e.g. 'genuine refugees' and 'victims of trafficking').[8] Indeed, it is by recognising the connections between punitive criminal justice policies and aggressive immigration restrictions – between cages and walls – that we can develop a more expansive account of state racism.[9] For this reason, *Deporting Black Britons* focuses on the deportation of 'foreign criminals', who in any case are the most likely to be deported despite having grown up in the UK.

Once in Jamaica, I was able to meet people who fit this description pretty much as soon as I landed: 'Black Britons' deported following criminal conviction who experienced deportation as banishment. However, despite meeting over 50 deported people during my time on the island, the book orbits around the stories of just four men – Jason, Ricardo, Chris and Denico – who

I came to know best, and who shared their memories and perspectives with me over four years. Importantly, the book's main focus is not on how these men survived in Jamaica post-deportation (more on this in Chapter 7), but on how and why they were deported in the first instance.[10] Chapters 2–5 offer individual life-story portraits of Jason, Ricardo, Chris and Denico, tracing their experiences of racism and criminalisation in the UK, as well as their legal journeys through the immigration system in Britain. Before engaging with their individual life stories, however, it is important to situate their expulsions in wider historical context.

What are the UK's laws and policies in relation to deportation? What broad social and political problems is deportation seen to respond to? How did we get to the point where deporting people from everything they know became both routine and unremarkable, and how can we best to situate deportation within a broader social and historical canvas? In short, why are 'Black Britons' being deported? Or, put differently, what is the preface to this book's opening scene? This chapter is organised around some tentative answers to this deceptively simple question: how did we get here?

## Deportation nation[11]

For almost all of the twentieth century, deportation was seen as an exceptional form of immigration control in Britain, reserved primarily for 'enemy aliens' in times of war.[12] Since the Second World War, the term 'deportation' has carried echoes of Nazi genocide – memories that should still orient us in the struggle against racism and nationalism[13] – and this is part of what has made deportation controversial.[14] More recently, however, deportation, often rebranded as 'removal' or 'return', has become an increasingly routine and unremarkable element of immigration policy. Matthew Gibney refers to the staggering rise in

deportations in the last three decades as the 'deportation turn'.[15] To understand how this came to be, we need to think about the various crises to which deportation is seen to respond.

Most obviously, deportations from the wealthy countries of the global North have increased partly in response to new migration dynamics. In Europe, since the late 1980s, more people have been migrating without official authorisation – unlike the post-war labour migrants and Commonwealth subjects before them.[16] These migrants have often claimed asylum as one route to settlement, which explains the focus on 'asylum seekers' within deportation policy.[17] As importantly, the overall number of people travelling internationally has increased significantly with the availability of affordable air travel, and this raises the spectre of uncontrolled and unregulated mobility. The increase in deportations is often explained by deporting states in these terms: as a response to clandestine mobilities, 'bogus asylum claims' and intensified border crossing in general.

However, while states like the UK might be wary about asylum, and remain particularly concerned about racialised migrants settling permanently, there has been a marked demand for temporary migrant labour in recent years, mainly at the bottom of the labour market.[18] Labour migrants are in demand for work particularly in hospitality and services in large cities – as well as within the agriculture, construction and health and social care sectors – and so immigration restrictions are, in practice, about managing competing interests, rather than actually 'expelling all the migrants'.[19] Indeed, in the last three decades it is the intensification of bordering, and not the intensification of migration, that has been historically unprecedented.[20] In this light, the person subject to deportation – the 'illegal immigrant' – is not a fixed type, and usually not a person who has crossed a border clandestinely, but rather an individual who may have been *illegalised*, for any number of reasons.[21] In other words, the law changes around people, and they are *made*

*illegal*.[22] Migration itself is not a problem, or rather does not have any pre-determined social significance, until 'migrants' are defined in discourse and law, turned into juridical categories like the 'asylum seeker' and the 'illegal immigrant', and thereby subjected to legal and coercive state power.[23] Clearly, then, deportation is not a straightforward response to there being more 'illegal immigrants'. Instead, in the context of intensified bordering, demand for particular kinds of disposable labour and widespread nativist fears about changing demography, deportation has become a central tool in state attempts to order and restrict migration.[24]

Deportation therefore serves an important *symbolic* function, demonstrating to citizens that states are *in control*. Deportation confirms that citizens *belong* because, unlike unwanted 'migrants', they cannot be deported (although some British citizens can now have their citizenship stripped as a precursor to deportation).[25] Deportation as spectacle is crucial here, because most irregular and deportable migrants will not actually be deported (states do not have the capacity nor the desire to deport everyone who breaches immigration restrictions).[26] However, deportation is not only about this affirmation of citizenship through negation, it also operates as a tool of labour discipline. Critical border scholars have shown that the *condition of deportability* makes migrant labour especially disposable, and thus desirable to employers.[27] In her excellent book *Deported*, Tanya Golash-Boza argues that mass deportation from the US 'is part of the neoliberal cycle of global capitalism … designed to relocate surplus labor to the periphery and to keep labor in the United States compliant'.[28] These arguments are compelling, but they do not map neatly onto the UK context.

Firstly, deportation from the UK does not exist on the same scale as in the US and so the claim that deportation involves the relocation of surplus labour seems a stretch. Equally, while illegalised labour is certainly desirable to some employers in

the UK, it is not clear that the economy relies on it. In other words, demand for deportation and demand for disposable labour represent sometimes competing and confused interests. Racial anxieties and resentments surrounding 'migration' enforce their own logics and demands, which are never separate from but neither reducible to economic rationalities. My point here is that there is no simple, one-size-fits-all explanation for the UK's immigration policies. Deportation is neither a straightforward response to an increase in the number of 'illegal immigrants', nor is it a concocted trick designed to grant employers access to cheap and pliable labour (as Gargi Bhattacharyya puts it in her reflections on racial capitalism: 'No one maps out this programme and then enacts it').[29] The contradictions matter, and to reach a more sophisticated account of the 'deportation turn' we need to consider wider shifts in economy, society and state.[30]

Firstly, the 'deportation turn' has been accompanied by the retrenchment of the welfare state and a renewed emphasis on individual responsibility. Increasingly, the state is seen not to owe anyone anything, and people who are deemed unproductive have become the object of contempt.[31] Those who 'depend' on welfare have been defined as failed citizens, as have the 'criminals' who populate the UK's bloated prison estate.[32] The punitive turn within welfare, immigration and criminal justice policy are all connected, symptoms of the transition from welfare-based social democracy to neoliberal authoritarianism.[33] In this context, 'migrants', especially 'illegal immigrants' and 'asylum seekers', have been defined as undeserving outsiders who take from 'hardworking taxpayers' (in an important sense, this logic precipitated Brexit).[34] Deportation therefore targets 'unproductive and dangerous foreigners', producing the state as a meaningful actor working in the interests of decent, law-abiding citizens, regardless of what immigration controls actually do in practice.

Of course, since 9/11, deportation has also been legitimated by concerns over 'security'.[35] Widespread concerns about

terrorism have intensified demands for the expulsion of ungrateful and dangerous 'migrants and minorities' more broadly, and fears surrounding terrorism, security and the 'enemy within' have made the confinement and expulsion of 'migrants' seem wholly legitimate (the 'war on terror' has even made it possible to denationalise and then deport British citizens).[36] Indeed, the figures of the 'terrorist', the 'migrant' and the 'criminal' seem to blur at the edges, and the anti-immigrant, law-and-order authoritarianism of both New Labour and Conservative governments has been licensed by this hydra-headed Other.[37] To summarise, in the context of austerity, anti-welfarism, punitive criminal justice, counter-terror and anti-immigrant fervour, deportation provides one answer to several questions about state authority and legitimacy in twenty-first-century Britain.

While this critical sketch of British politics might seem a long way from the lives of destitute 'deportees' in Jamaica, it is, in an important sense, the story of how they got there. Put in the broadest terms, twenty-first-century late capitalism is defined by the proliferation of borders and walls,[38] and 'the emergence of new logics of expulsion'.[39] Deportation from the UK to Jamaica should be situated in this context.

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*Deporting Black Britons* examines the effects of immigration control on people's lives, without providing a close analysis of immigration law and policy itself. This is a book about how immigration control is lived, rather than a fine-grained account of the UK's immigration system. However, it is important to offer a broad account of the UK's deportation regime in this introductory chapter, and to explain some of the different types of expulsion and some relevant policy terms.[40]

Deportation represents the coercive negation of citizenship through forcible expulsion; it is the logical extension of migrant 'illegality' – 'the sovereign power to deport is an extension of

the sovereign right to exclude'.[41] In practice, people are deported for a number of reasons and under different names, depending on the immigration policies of the deporting state. In UK law, 'deportation' is a specific term that applies to people whose removal from the country is deemed 'conducive to the public good'. Most often, this means people with criminal records. 'Removal', on the other hand, 'refers to a larger set of cases involving the removal of non-citizens who have either entered the country illegally or deceptively, stayed in the country longer than their visa permitted, or otherwise violated the conditions of their leave to remain in the UK'.[42] 'Refused asylum seekers' and 'overstayers' tend to be removed, while 'foreign criminals' are deported – although in practice many people move between statuses (e.g. people overstay, are criminalised *and* claim asylum).[43] In this book, however, I do not restrict the use of 'deportation' to its definition within UK policy. Instead, I use the term more broadly to refer to all cases of forced expulsion, in no small part because alternatives like 'removal' and 'return' are designed to obscure the violence of deportation.

The UK enforces the removal of non-citizens in different ways (I use the term 'non-citizens' rather than 'migrants' here because some people who are subject to immigration control were born in the UK, or moved as toddlers, and so it makes little sense to call them migrants). Some people are 'refused entry at port' and returned before they properly enter national territory (these removals are not included in the statistics presented below). In other cases, non-citizens living in the UK have their immigration applications rejected, and are then made illegal and told to leave the country or face detention and forced expulsion. Under current immigration policies, these illegalised non-citizens are denied access to employment, housing, healthcare and the ability to drive or open a bank account, and are thereby incentivised to leave 'voluntarily'. Many thousands leave each year on these terms and their removals are counted as 'voluntary

returns' (there were 20,502 such returns in 2017). For thousands of others, removals are enforced, which means that they are deported via immigration detention, and escorted onto planes with force. In 2017, there were 12,321 such 'enforced removals'.

For those whose removal is enforced, a further distinction concerns whether they are deported on commercial flights or on specifically chartered mass deportation flights. Since 2001, the UK has used charter flights for deportation to particular countries. Initially, charter flights went to Kosovo and Albania – and there are still more charter flights to Albania than to any other country – but they have since flown to the Czech Republic, Afghanistan, Iraq, Jamaica, Nigeria, Ghana, Sri Lanka and Pakistan. Charter flights contain only 'deportees', escorts and the flight crew, and they leave in the early hours of the morning from undisclosed locations. They have therefore been described as the Home Office's 'most brutal and terrifying instrument'.[44] The violence of these charter flights was made publicly visible by 15 activists, known as the Stansted 15, who in March 2017 took direct action to ground a mass deportation flight scheduled to fly to Nigeria and Ghana (which led to a charge of terrorism offences, for which they were convicted).[45] There were four mass deportation flights to Jamaica between 2014 and 2019, although charter flights went much more regularly to Nigeria, Ghana, Pakistan and Albania over this period (in 2017, a total of 1,664 people were deported on charter flights). Importantly, however, the vast majority of 'enforced removals' still occur on commercial flights, where deported people are placed at the back of planes otherwise occupied by people going on holiday or visiting relatives.

As noted, it is only quite recently that deportation has become a routine component of immigration control in liberal democracies in the global North. Before the late 1980s, the total number of persons removed from the UK each year did not exceed 2,000. This number rose steadily throughout the 1990s,

reaching roughly 7,000 by 1999. In the 2000s, this number spiked dramatically, peaking in 2004, when there were 21,425 enforced removals alone, with thousands more returning 'voluntarily' or 'assisted'. Since 2004, the number of enforced removals has been falling steadily, and in 2017 they were down to 12,049. Interestingly, the number of 'enforced returns' to Jamaica has been falling at a greater rate than the overall number.[46]

However, a note of caution is warranted here. The statistics on removals and deportations are slippery, because methods of data collection and categorisation change over time. In 2017, a total of 12,049 people were removed by force, but there were an additional 20,502 who left 'voluntarily', after being threatened with deportation (indeed, in 2017 more Jamaican returns were 'voluntary' than 'enforced'). Data on 'voluntary returns' have only been collected since 2014, and so it is not yet possible to track changes over a meaningful length of time. In this context, it is difficult to say whether deportations have been falling, or just changing form, and it is therefore important to view deportation in relation to the wider policies which illegalise and exclude non-citizens. The 'voluntary return' of people who have been denied access to employment, shelter, education and healthcare is of course far from voluntary, and it is worth noting that the collection of data on 'voluntary returns' corresponds neatly with the introduction of the UK's 'hostile environment' immigration policies – policies which were explicitly designed to increase the number and proportion of 'voluntary returns'.

The 'hostile environment' refers to the set of immigration policies introduced with the Immigration Act 2014 and intensified with the 2016 Act, which were designed to comprehensively exclude 'illegal immigrants' from all public services and to facilitate their detection through various data-sharing initiatives.[47] Landlords were required to confirm their tenants' 'right to rent'; employers could be fined up to £20,000 per worker for employing 'illegal migrants'; NHS staff were required to check

people's right to access healthcare; university lecturers were supposed to monitor their students' attendance; schools were required to collect nationality information on their pupils; banks and the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) were required to share information with the Home Office.[48] All of this was designed to create, in the words of then Home Secretary Theresa May, a 'really hostile environment', so that 'illegal immigrants' would find it impossible to live in the UK, and thus would be encouraged to 'go home'.[49] Clearly, these policies will have impacted the number of 'voluntary returns'. Indeed, the intention of the 'hostile environment' was to incentivise people to enact their own expulsion by denying them access to the means of life.

The UK's 'hostile environment' came under intense scrutiny following the 'Windrush scandal' in spring 2018, when it was discovered that people who had moved to the UK before 1973, mainly from the Caribbean, were being caught up in the UK's 'hostile environment' immigration policies. Amelia Gentleman at *The Guardian*, along with a few others, began collecting stories of people who had lost their jobs, houses and access to healthcare because they had been illegalised – some had even been deported and were struggling back in the Caribbean.[50] The story picked up steam, and Home Secretary Amber Rudd was forced to resign. Quite quickly, a consensus emerged: the Windrush generation were citizens, members of the national 'we', and thus their treatment had been unacceptable and cruel. The Windrush generation were definitively not the 'illegal immigrants' that the policies were designed to target.[51] In this way, the harm done to 'Windrush migrants' was isolated from the treatment of more recent migrants who had been subject to the 'hostile environment' – people who were also illegalised, forced into destitution, detained and deported. That said, the scandal did provide some space for a broader conversation about the UK's draconian immigration policies, and for the first time in a long

while deportation became controversial. Indeed, this explains the marked drop in 'enforced returns' in both 2017 and 2018.[52]

However, the concern for Windrush migrants was not without conditions. The 'Windrush generation' were constructed as 'good migrants/citizens' who had contributed, abided by the law and paid their taxes – even if they were now pensioners or in receipt of benefits – and this worked to distinguish them from un-deserving 'illegal immigrants'. This framing was made especially clear when Sajid Javid, the recently appointed Home Secretary, promised to assist all wrongfully deported Windrush migrants, *except those with criminal records*.[53] In effect, having a criminal record, however minor or from however long ago, was enough to nullify over 45 years of residence. Even in that rarest of moments in British politics, when there was widespread sympathy for one particular group of 'migrants', the deportation of those with criminal records remained perfectly proportionate. Never mind what they would be returned to – never mind the news stories we had just read about what they were being returned to – the mere mention of criminality was enough to set us back into default mode: 'send them back'. This reflects the almost total consensus on the need to deport 'foreign offenders', which the government would later rely on when deporting Jamaican 'foreign offenders' en masse in 2019 and 2020, despite the ongoing public outcry about the 'Windrush scandal'.[54] Fergus Shanahan, executive editor of the UK's most widely read daily newspaper, *The Sun*, laid out this perspective quite clearly back in 2006:

> Let's be clear, if someone comes to our country and abuses our hospitality by committing serious crimes, I don't give a toss what happens to them when they are thrown out. I'm willing to pay their airfare and for the bullet when they get home. We've got enough of our own villains without importing or releasing back into the com-munity the rapists, muggers and murderers of the world.[55]

It is significant that the men featured in this book were deported not simply as 'illegal immigrants' but as 'foreign criminals'.

Importantly, they were deported under laws created by New Labour to enforce the deportation of 'foreign national offenders'. To understand why the UK deports 'Black Britons', then, we need to travel further back, and perhaps the critical moment in this story is the 'foreign national prisoner crisis' of 2006.

## 'Foreign criminals' and racist criminal justice

The figure of the 'foreign criminal' first emerged in April 2006, when it was discovered that over 1,000 'foreign prisoners' had been released from prison without being considered for deportation.[56] An enormous political scandal ensued, and the mainstream press focused on the 'foreign killers, rapists and paedophiles' who were 'let loose' and 'roaming our streets'.[57] The Home Secretary, Charles Clarke, was sacked and the government promised to introduce new policies and laws to deal with 'foreign criminals'.

This 'foreign national prisoner crisis' surfaced amid more general 'moral panic' about the number of migrants, especially 'asylum seekers', who had been arriving in Britain over recent years. New Labour had been in power for nine years at this point, and while they had demonstrated their steadfast commitment to draconian immigration policies, punitive criminal justice, and anti-welfare politics over that period, they had not done enough to assuage the criticism of the Conservative opposition and the tabloid press. As such, when the 'foreign prisoner crisis' hit, it was made to represent not only Labour's lack of control over immigration, but also the government's soft touch approach to crime and welfare. The 'foreign criminal' emerged here as a kind of 'perfect villain', demonstrating Labour's total lack of control. Importantly for my purposes, while the 'foreign prisoner' scandal subsided after a few months, the figure of the 'foreign criminal' was born,[58] with far-reaching and ongoing consequences for policy and practice.[59]

Firstly, in response to the 'crisis', the government increased the resources allocated to its criminal casework directorate within the immigration service, expanding it to 35 times its original size in a matter of months.[60] 'Foreign offenders' were now routinely detained under immigration powers after they had served their prison terms, and they found it increasingly difficult to get released from prisons or immigration removal centres after serving their sentences (the UK has a system of indefinite immigration detention). The number of 'foreign criminals' deported increased fivefold, from about 1,000 in 2005 to around 5,400 in 2008,[61] and numbers have remained relatively stable in subsequent years, averaging over 5,000 in the four years following the scandal, and peaking at 6,171 in 2016.[62] The prison system has also been adapted to facilitate deportations – there are currently two 'foreign national only' prisons in the UK, and Home Office immigration staff are increasingly embedded within prisons more widely.[63] Since the scandal of 2006, then, 'foreign offenders' have increased as a proportion both of immigration detainees and of enforced removals, and thus the mushrooming of media stories on 'foreign criminals' has been mirrored in deportation practices.[64]

Changes to law and policy have facilitated the increase in deportations. New Labour's UK Borders Act 2007 introduced 'automatic deportation', which meant that the Home Office would automatically pursue the deportation of any 'foreign offender' who received a prison sentence of over 12 months. Since then, there has been a successive lowering of the threshold for 'criminality' in deportation cases. Individuals are increasingly being deported on the basis of minor and non-custodial convictions; many are defined as 'persistent offenders' despite not having received prison terms. The Home Office and the police initiated a joint policy called Operation Nexus in 2012, which allows 'Nexus officers' to build cases against non-citizens who have not been convicted in criminal courts, but whose removal

is still deemed 'conducive to the public good' based on police intelligence. Individuals are thereby deported on suspicion,[65] and the fact that the UK now produces 'foreign criminals' without the crime is a sign of how punitive policy has become.[66]

As importantly, in the decade following the 'foreign prisoner crisis', appeal rights were cut, and legal aid was removed for deportation cases, so that most individuals facing deportation have been unable to find and fund legal representation. The UK also introduced a policy called 'deport first, appeal later' in 2014, to ensure that 'foreign criminals' could be deported first, and have their appeals heard from abroad. Unsurprisingly, out-of-country appeals were impossible to lodge effectively, and the policy was therefore ruled unlawful in June 2017.[67]

Even when 'foreign offenders' do get a chance to appeal from the UK, they have to demonstrate that their ties to the UK outweigh the strong 'public interest' in their removal. Many appeal their deportations on the basis of 'the right to respect for private and family life' – Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights – but the Immigration Rules make these claims extremely difficult to win. Relationships with British children and partners usually do not outweigh the 'public interest' in deportation,[68] and individuals have to prove that they have lived legally in the UK for most of their lives, are 'socially and culturally integrated' and that there would be 'very significant obstacles' to their integration into the country to which they are being deported.[69] Even where an individual meets this threshold, making the argument successfully is another matter, and for people who receive prison sentences of over four years the case is almost unwinnable. Some people facing deportation might claim asylum, but winning asylum cases is also incredibly difficult, especially for Jamaican nationals with criminal records.[70] Put simply, any foreign national who interacts with the criminal justice system will likely face deportation, and changes to the Immigration Rules and legislation have made appealing

deportation increasingly difficult.[71] Of course, the 'strong public interest' in deporting anyone with a criminal record has marked implications for black men in Britain, given that the criminal justice system is institutionally racist.[72]

Overall, black people in Britain are more likely to live in poverty, to be unemployed and to have few qualifications – and, working with Census categories, 'Black-Caribbeans' face greater structural disadvantages than 'Black-Africans'. Black people in Britain face employment discrimination as well as high exclusion rates from school (affecting black boys in particular), and experience profound disproportionality in the criminal justice system.[73] Indeed, the racialisation of black people in Britain, and African-Caribbean populations in particular, has long focused on issues of crime and disorder. Racist 'common sense' surrounding 'black culture', the 'black family' and 'black crime' has remained remarkably consistent over the last six decades. In particular, the apparent criminality of 'black youth' has been explained in terms of pathological family structures, primarily in relation to 'absent fathers' and 'matrifocal families'.[74]

These tropes have found renewed articulation in relation to debates surrounding knife crime and gang violence, which have licensed new forms of policing and criminalisation targeting black men and boys.[75] Black people are stopped and searched by the police at around six times the rate of white people, and they are then more likely to be arrested, charged and given a prison sentence – most often for possession of drugs.[76] Importantly for the purposes of this book, the heavy policing of young black men now has deportation consequences, and it was clear that disproportionate policing practices precipitated the expulsions of the men I met in Jamaica. Many had been criminalised for possession or supply of drugs, carrying a bladed article or 'anti-social behaviour' – offences which inevitably reflect disproportionate policing practices. In the following chapters, I discuss processes of criminalisation and racism more substantively, but

it is important to state at the outset that racist criminal justice practices propel 'Black Britons' towards deportation.

As is probably evident from the tone of the chapter so far, the emphasis in this book is not with interrogating why people commit crimes but rather with how and why they are *criminalised*. Of course, people exercise their own agency and make bad decisions; indeed, this is how deported people narrate their own lives. However, my critique is reserved for the state policies and practices which delimit agency and choice. Any reference to 'criminals' is used in scare quotes because the 'criminal' is not a human type but a juridical category, simply a person who has been criminalised in law (most people break the law, but processes of criminalisation are highly uneven).

The book does not attempt to moralise about why people sold drugs, committed robberies or got into fights, and it is hoped that by moving away from notions of moral and individual failure more critical and productive explanations will emerge. The argument presented in this book is that criminalisation and deportation should be viewed in historical context, as modes of racist exclusion. In this light, we can appreciate that while some Jamaican nationals might commit criminal offences, their forced expulsion from the UK to Jamaica forms part of longer arc of historical and racial injustice.

## From *Empire Windrush* to Open Arms

The arrival of the *Empire Windrush* in 1948 has become central to the story Britain tells about itself. The boat, carrying 492 Caribbean British subjects, many of them former servicemen, is seen to have heralded the irresistible rise of multi-racial Britain.[77] However, when post-war migrants arrived from the Caribbean, the Indian subcontinent and Africa, they were immediately constructed as a problem.[78] Fears surrounding 'coloured migration' motivated restrictions on the movement

of people from the Commonwealth, beginning with the Commonwealth Immigrants Act 1962. In subsequent immigration and nationality acts, the government further restricted 'coloured migration' by transforming the terms of political membership (the desired effect was never to restrict the mobility of those from the white dominions – that is, Australia, Canada, New Zealand). Britain was thereby transformed from an Empire and Commonwealth into a white island nation. Citizenship was increasingly defined by descent and thus 'race', and Commonwealth citizens were transformed into aliens.[79] The millions of people in the Commonwealth who had learnt English in British schools, recognised the queen as their sovereign and fought in two World Wars were, in quite a brief period of time, completely excised from the British polity.

The effect of this excision is that Jamaican nationals living in the UK today can be defined as 'illegal immigrants'. The reasons for them moving to and settling in the UK without official authorisation are afforded no real consideration. Those facing deportation to Jamaica are simply non-members who broke the rules, and that is all there is to it. This relies on the active forgetting of historical relations and entanglements, as though history were not relevant to contemporary patterns of migration and bordering. This forgetting is necessary to justify today's deportations to Jamaica.[80] In a cruel twist, when Jamaicans are deported 'back home', they often return with British accents, totally unfamiliar with life on the island, and many struggle to find basic security in a country with punishing levels of poverty, debt and everyday violence (see Chapter 7).

Contemporary Jamaican society is characterised by gross inequalities between rich and poor, as uptown people drive SUVs between shopping malls and their securely grilled houses, while people downtown live in severe poverty, in squatter communities with zinc-fence lanes and cramped tenement yards, amid the reality of 'turf war' and police violence, almost totally

abandoned by both the state and labour market. Unsurprisingly, this uptown–downtown split maps closely onto racial and colour-based divisions on the island.[81] However, while Jamaica is renowned for its staggering homicide rate,[82] violence and poverty in Jamaica are a reflection of structural conditions and not 'defective cultures'. Since the 1980s, a brutal regime of enforced austerity has been enforced on Jamaica by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the country currently allocates around half of its yearly spend to debt repayments.[83] It is austerity and the constricted labour market which produce the conditions for violence, as Jamaica's urban poor increasingly rely on criminal modes of income generation – in relation to weapons, drugs, extortion and so on.[84]

Crucially, economic and social relations in Jamaica are still structured by the plantation, a point I elaborate in Chapter 7. If history does not pass, but instead accumulates,[85] then Jamaica's global marginality, its reliance on single-commodity exports and tourism, and its staggering debt profile cannot be disconnected from the history of slavery and colonialism.[86] In this light, the 'post' in 'postcolonialism' does not imply a clean break. As Wendy Brown notes, 'we use the term "post" only for a present whose past continues to capture and structure it'.[87] Because the economy is still structured by slavery, colonialism and debt, the Jamaican government is reliant on development funding and therefore courting the favour of wealthier states. In relation to the UK, this means complying with UK immigration policy in return for development funding, investment and the maintenance of cordial diplomatic relations. These unequal relations of development and dependency explain the existence of Open Arms Drop in Centre, the homeless shelter funded by the British government, through the aid budget, to house destitute and forcibly returned 'Black Britons'. Indeed, by tracing the journey from the *Empire Windrush* to Open Arms we can gain critical insights into the recent history of both Britain and Jamaica.

So far in this chapter, I have tried to situate the deportation of 'Black Britons' in historical context. This discussion should frame the life stories which follow. At this point, however, I want to describe the theoretical and political preoccupations which organise the subsequent chapters. In short, my overarching concern is with better understanding the relationship between racism and immigration control, and it is worth taking some time to discuss how and why this remains the central question in the book.

## Race, racism and immigration control in multi-status Britain

The dominant consensus in contemporary Britain seems to be that 'it is not racist to control immigration'. In this account, immigration policies are not racist because they do not make distinctions on the basis of 'race'. Racism, after all, refers to bigotry, intolerance and ideologies of biological superiority.[88] Political parties therefore consistently claim that their immigration policies are non-racist, because they are designed solely to protect and prioritise the interests of the British people.[89] However, neither 'the citizen' nor 'the migrant' are raceless figures. Only some 'migrants' become visible as 'migrants' – the Iraqi asylum seeker represents a grave threat, while the white Australian is scarcely visible. Meanwhile, even as some migrants do not really count as migrants, especially if they are wealthy and white, many black and brown British citizens are defined as second- or third- generation *migrants* still, made foreign despite formal membership. Without some conception of race, we have very little purchase on these issues. Nicholas De Genova's insights are instructive here:

> In the European context, the very figure of migration is always already racialized, and anti-racist struggles are inevitably concerned at least in part with the racial conditions of (non-European) migrants – even as dominant discourses of migration in Europe systematically disavow and dissimulate race as such.[90]

De Genova's point here is that, in Europe, the non-belonging of migrants is articulated through ideas about race, while racialised minorities are primarily defined by their 'migrantness'. In short, it is impossible to understand race and migration in isolation, and we need to better appreciate the 'racial dimension of the structural unease and the grids of intelligibility that inform the governing of immigration'.[91]

There is a broader and in fact more straightforward point to be made about the relationship between race and immigration control, though. Nation-states and the inequalities between them were formed through colonialism, which means that the bordering of these states inevitably has racial implications and effects. Race cannot be dispensed with so briskly when the principal target of immigration restrictions, the 'global poor', corresponds so closely with those 'formerly colonised' and those racialised as 'non-white'.[92] In this context, immigration controls are profoundly racial in their effects, even as race is disavowed – 'buried alive' to borrow David Goldberg's term.[93] However, this does not mean that racism is unchanging. As Stuart Hall reminds us, racism is always historically specific, and the challenge therefore is to theorise how racial distinctions and hierarchies are made and remade under particular conditions.[94] Borders are central to these processes of remaking, and *Deporting Black Britons* is therefore concerned with how immigration controls reconfigure racial distinctions and hierarchies in the present.

Several critical studies of immigration, racism and citizenship have developed precisely this argument. Mae Ngai, for example, in her important study of 'illegality' in the US, argues that restrictive immigration laws in the 1920s *produced* new categories of racial difference in the US, particularly in relation to Asians and Mexicans.[95] In the contemporary British context, Jon Fox, Laura Moroşanu and Eszter Szilassy examine the racialisation of Eastern Europeans, arguing that whiteness is 'the contingent

outcome of immigration policy, practices, and processes',[96] while Les Back and Shamser Sinha have suggested that immigration controls produce 'new hierarchies of belonging', which reconfigure how racism manifests in contemporary London.[97] These scholars all argue that *race is produced by and through borders*, rather than existing in any stable way *a priori*.[98]

Importantly, then, it is not simply that immigration controls are enforced in racially discriminatory ways, but that the very terrain in which racial difference becomes meaningful is thoroughly structured by immigration restriction and the legal borders of citizenship.[99] This has significant implications for the struggle against racism, because as bordering practices change so does the very meaning of race and racism. This is especially relevant in a context in which borders are now everyday and everywhere:[100] 'transported to the middle of political space' and 'implosive, infinitely elastic, and, in effect, truly everywhere within the space of the nation-state'.[101] Borders get between people and follow them around, and this means that lines of difference and division – especially racial, national and cultural difference – are crosscut by migration and citizenship status.[102] To describe this terrain, I have found it useful to describe Britain as multi-status, and in fact this book is as much about racism in multi-status Britain as it is about deportation.[103]

By defining Britain as multi-status, I am firstly drawing attention to the fact that increasing numbers of the resident population in the UK are now non-citizens. Between 1993 and 2015, the number of non-citizens living in the UK increased from around 2 million to over 5 million (and the foreign-born population doubled from 3.8 million to over 8.7 million).[104] Crucially, non-EU citizens have been rendered increasingly temporary as the connection between migration, settlement and naturalisation has been unfastened – and a similar fate awaits (some) European nationals following the UK's departure from the EU. The British state now has the power to illegalise a greater

number of people living within its borders, in more extensive and total ways, and this means that ethnic and racial differences are fractured and complicated by immigration status.[105]

If Britain is multi-status, then immigration control should be central to any account of racism and difference. Indeed, the prefix 'multi' has been used in several debates about race in Britain – the UK has variously been described as multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, multi-racial, multi-racist and characterised by emergent forms of multi-culture. Defining the UK as multi-status is therefore intended to centre immigration control within broader conversations about race, nationalism and culture (see Chapter 6 for a fuller account of multi-status Britain). Overall, the term 'multi-status' helps us to see new things about contemporary Britain, and in this book it helps me to describe people's friendship groups, family relationships and legal journeys.

More theoretically, the centring of status reminds us that immigration law is *productive*:

> While they are presented as filters, sorting people into desirable and non-desirable, skilled and unskilled, genuine and bogus, worker, wife, refugee, etc., national borders are better analyzed as moulds, as attempts to create certain types of subjects and subjectivities. Thus borders are productive and generative. They place people in new types of power relations with others and they impart particular kinds of subjectivities. Borders, then, are the mark of a particular kind of relationship, one based on deep divisions and inequalities between people who are given varying national statuses. It is important to recognize that this has far-reaching implications and is not simply restricted to the event of crossing a territorial border.[106]

Immigration controls not only produce racial distinctions and hierarchies, then, they are also productive of social meanings, identities and exclusions more broadly.[107] In later chapters, I question how immigration controls are implicated in the regulation of gender, sexuality and the family.[108] Indeed, the deportation of the men in this book was justified not only by reference to criminality and illegality, but also in relation to

'family life'. Each of the men appealed their deportation on the basis of connections to loved ones, and each was rejected on these terms, their relationships deemed insufficient to outweigh the 'public interest in deportation'.[109] In deportation appeals, some relationships are more legible than others, and legal determinations invariably mobilise race, gender and class-based stereotypes surrounding intimate and family relationships – particularly relevant for this book are ideas about 'absent fathers' and 'idle criminals'. Put simply, racism works through gender and sexuality to justify and enable deportation, and I discuss these processes further in Chapters 4 and 5.

Having presented some of the theoretical questions which frame the book, in what remains of this introduction I want to explore questions of methodology: explaining how the research was conducted; why I chose to speak to the people I did; and discussing some of the ethical and political questions that emerged in the process.

### Ethnography, portraiture, power

Perhaps the first question worth discussing in relation to this book is 'Why Jamaica?', especially given that I am not Jamaican. Indeed, I had not visited the island before starting this project in 2015, and I decided to focus on the deportation of 'foreign criminals' before working out how and where I would meet people. All I knew was that I wanted to meet individuals after they had been deported, and I did not have the funds or resources to travel to more than one country (the research for this book was conducted for my PhD). In fact, the focus on Jamaica materialised only once I had contacted a local organisation in Kingston, the National Organization of Deported Migrants (NODM), and they had agreed to let me volunteer there.

In the first instance, then, I selected Jamaica because meeting deported people there seemed most feasible – the island is small

and English speaking (although Jamaican English, or patois, is the main language) and a local organisation working with deported migrants agreed to host me. Further, even though Jamaica was not the easiest place to live, it felt more navigable to me than countries like Pakistan, Albania, Nigeria and Somalia – other countries that receive a sizeable number of 'deportees'. Importantly, while the book is focused on the deportation of Jamaican nationals, my hope is that the arguments will have a much wider resonance. Of course, the relationship between racism and immigration control takes on particular dynamics in relation to Jamaican nationals, especially in relation to the racist criminalisation of black young men in the UK, as well as with regard to the afterlives of slavery and empire in Jamaica (issues which I trace substantively in subsequent chapters). However, the theoretical and political implications of the arguments developed in this book should not be restricted to any one national or racial group.

I first travelled to Jamaica in September 2015, and began working with NODM straightaway. NODM is an organisation set up and run by deported migrants that provides assistance to people more recently deported from the UK and North America.[110] NODM has received almost all of its funding from the British government, which comes through the UK's aid budget as part of the same programme that supports Open Arms (see Chapter 8). Through this funding, NODM has been contracted to collect deported persons from Montego Bay airport, assist them with securing national documentation and help them to clear personal effects through Jamaican customs. The organisation also run workshops and offers other kinds of support where possible – although much of this additional support has relied on the initiative, commitment and tirelessness of Ossie, the now president of NODM.

Ossie was the face and the pulse of NODM during my time in Jamaica, and he was my main point of contact there between

2015 and 2019. During my initial trip to Jamaica, between September 2015 and January 2016, I spent the first few weeks mostly with Ossie at the NODM office. From there I arranged to meet deported people, firstly in Kingston and later all around the island (see Map 3). I met tens of deported people in those early weeks – including Jason, Ricardo, Chris and Denico – either at the NODM office, when following Ossie around Kingston, or after calling and arranging to meet people one-on-one. Ossie became a close friend and without him this book would not have been possible. He introduced me to deported persons, explained things to me and was always keen to 'reason' about politics more broadly. His insights are threaded throughout this book's pages.

In total, I spent just over eight months in Jamaica across four trips between 2015 and 2019. I met most of the people who feature in this study in Kingston, and tended to invite them up to the University of West Indies campus in Mona (UWI), where I was living. Deported people often felt unsafe and hypervisible where they lived, and so campus was a nice place to be: up at the edge of the city, shadowed by the Blue Mountains. Jason, Denico or Chris mostly came to meet me up at UWI, and we would walk around campus, go to the student bar or hang out in my flat, often watching football highlights. My interactions with Ricardo were slightly different because he lived in Montego Bay. I did not know anyone else in the city, and so most of my time there was spent with him, depending on whether he was working or not. When I returned to Jamaica in 2016 and 2017, Denico had moved to St Elizabeth, the sleepy parish in the south-west of the island, and so, with two of the four men living in the west of the island, more of my fieldwork was conducted out of Kingston, which I preferred (see Map 2). Whenever I was in Jamaica, though, whether in Kingston, Montego Bay or St Elizabeth, these four men were the people I spent most of my time with (with the exception, perhaps, of Ossie).

I did not intend to restrict my focus to these four men, however, and I met over 50 deported persons during my time in Jamaica. There were several others with whom I recorded long life-story interviews, maintained contact with over several years, and even drafted chapters for, but in the end I decided to restrict the portraits to just four. In part, this was because four stories already captured so much and because four felt like the right length, but it is also because I ended up with so much more material on Jason, Ricardo, Chris and Denico. I met them early on, and when I returned to the UK after my first trip to Jamaica I was able to stay in touch with them – primarily over WhatsApp, the messaging app on which we could send messages, pictures and voice notes (short recorded audio messages). Once I was back in the UK, I was also able meet some of their friends and family, which allowed me to continue researching and thinking about their life stories. This was especially important because the research process involved spending four months in Jamaica, before returning to the UK for nine months. And so, while there are many things that are especially interesting about the experiences and narratives of these four men, it is more accurate to say that the book orbits around them because they let me into their lives at the right time.

All four men are of a similar age, born between 1986 and 1992, and all left Jamaica as children, between the ages of 10 and 15. Each of them lived in the UK for around half their lives before being deported as young adults. Despite being part of a cohort, however, their stories diverge in important ways. Jason lived in London for around 14 years, and for most of that time he was homeless. Family rejection and immigration control compounded one another, and he could not find a route out of his illegality and enforced destitution. Ricardo, on the other hand, lived in Smethwick in the West Midlands, with his 'mum', in fact his step-auntie, who raised him with his cousins. He had a happy childhood and lots of friends, despite police

surveillance and harassment from the age of 15. Chris was the only one of the four who had indefinite leave to remain (i.e. permanent residence), but after his first conviction for street robbery he could not naturalise, and he struggled to find work and to survive on meagre unemployment benefits. He sold drugs when his two children were 'on the way' and ended up being deported in 2013. Denico was also deported following a drugs conviction, but he had been an 'illegal immigrant' and so barred from seeking legal employment. He had moved to the UK when he was 13, but when his father regularised his stay with his new family, Denico was not included, and so he remained 'illegal'. He found some security when he met his partner Kendal, and they lived together with her two young daughters for around 18 months. However, at this point he was selling drugs to fund his immigration appeal, and this ultimately led to his deportation and separation from Kendal and the girls in August 2015.

Overall, then, the four men had very different experiences of criminalisation and illegalisation, but they all felt that their deportations were unjust because Britain was their home. Their friends, their families and most of their memories were in the UK, and they had nothing to return to in Jamaica. This is why the four men in this book might be referred to as 'Black Britons': they had attended British schools; they have British accents; and their reference points and cultural identifications are more British than Jamaican. Importantly, though, referring to the men as 'Black Britons' is not meant to recast them as 'really' British and not Jamaican. How these four men will relate to Britain and Jamaica is likely to change over time and with context, as with all identities.[111] By referring to them as 'Black Britons', then, my intention is simply to suggest that they are in many ways indistinguishable from black British citizens, and this points to some of the tensions between legal and lived forms of belonging in multi-status Britain – tensions which are brought into sharp relief by deportation.

To better understand these tensions, I travelled to meet the men's friends and family who remained in the UK. I visited Chris's mum several times, always at her house in West London. I met Ricardo's friends in the West Midlands and we talked about the police. I walked around the park where he had played football as a teenager and I spent time in his cousin's Jamaican restaurant. In East London, I played football with a group of homeless men and some of them remembered Jason from his time there. Two of them shared memories of Jason, the damage and vitality which defined his survival on the streets. South of Birmingham, I met Denico's partner Kendal and her mother Tracy, and they described how his deportation had affected them, especially Kendal's two young daughters. These friends and family members taught me that deportation is not suffered by individuals alone, even as it individualises. And, while deportation ruptures and separates, it is not 'the end'. While my relationships with family and friends were not as intensive as with Jason, Ricardo, Chris and Denico, our conversations have been essential to the overall shape and argument of the book.

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In a book of this kind, it is important to reflect on my own 'positionality', especially in relation to race, class, gender and sexuality. I am a young man of a similar age to Jason, Ricardo, Chris and Denico, and we all grew up in major English cities and went to state schools at a similar time. This meant that we had a baseline of shared knowledge and experience from which to build – whether in relation to school, TV/film, celebrities and, most importantly, football. My maleness is clearly relevant here, and given that I am a straight-presenting man, a certain unquestioned heterosexuality permeated our relationships. I would speak about my partner with the four men, and they would ask how she was doing. Heterosexuality and maleness were part of what made me similar, and perhaps unthreatening, to Jason,

Ricardo, Chris and Denico. Assumed norms around gender and sexuality underwrote our rapport, the ease with which we got to know one another, and allowed for a certain kind of intimacy which that sameness can make possible. And yet there are obvious dangers in relying on maleness and heterosexuality to build rapport, when both are sites of such profound violence.[112] While I might claim that I did not to encourage machismo, and that I challenged certain sexist practices when I encountered them, there is no denying that our hanging out necessarily entailed certain gendered performances and complicities.

In fact, my focus solely on men was not intended, and I did meet and interview several deported women. However, I did not become as close to the women I met, nor spend anywhere near as much time with them as I was able to with the men featured in this book. Equally, many of the women I interviewed were older and did not have criminal records – my focus on criminality meant that there were more men who fit my target sample (although see the discussion of Michelle's story in Chapter 5). Despite my focus on deported men, however, I do incorporate gender into the analysis (however incompletely). Of course, gender is pertinent not only for women, and the men in this book experienced racialisation, criminalisation and illegalisation in profoundly gendered ways.[113] As Gail Lewis argues, 'racialization is a compound process that gathers into itself and is inseparable from discourses of gender and sexuality', and I try to recognise this inseparability of race from gender and sexuality in discussions throughout the book.[114] I also feature the perspectives of mothers, (ex)partners and female friends across the chapters (although the book would certainly benefit from more of their insights).

In terms of positionality, it is also relevant that I am mixed race (Indian/White British). When I asked Ricardo if it would have made a difference if I was white, he said 'Yeah, it definitely made a difference that you were mixed innit; if you

were white I wouldn't feel comfortable telling you my story so deep'. I prodded him further on this, and he refined his answer somewhat: 'Okay, it's just like, if you were a white person it might have taken longer to gain that trust, because what I spoke to you about was very emotional, stuff that I don't talk about like that'. On the other hand, when I asked Denico if my 'race' made a difference to our relationship he replied: 'Not really. It's how you put yourself across really. That's how I decided to open up and get involved' (indeed, Denico read me as 'maybe Italian or something' when we first met). Of course, the research would have played out differently if I were black and/or Caribbean, although it is difficult to say exactly how. That said, I am cautious about what can be inferred from either racial proximity or difference. There is always more going on, something in excess of racial categories, and positionality should be about more than listing categories of identity.

Let me be clear, I am not suggesting that there are no relevant differences between me and the four men, nor that my ability to connect on a 'human level' flattened out imbalances of power. I am not Jamaican, I am not black and I did not grow up in poverty. Perhaps more importantly, I am a university researcher, I am writing this book (which represents an immense imbalance of power) and I have a British passport, which means I can move back and forth between the UK and Jamaica. However, having known and cared about these four men for some time now, my view is that understanding is possible through ethical care and political commitment. This kind of research presents as many opportunities for understanding and solidarity as it does for exploitation and violence – and this is as much about what happens outside the pages of this book as within them. In any case, hopefully something of my friendships with Jason, Ricardo, Chris and Denico comes through in the pages which follow, not overplayed or self-righteous, but as the necessary ground for a mode of research in which 'showing the people' is never an end

in itself but only a beginning, a very small contribution to the collective struggle against racism and expulsions.

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*Deporting Black Britons* is an ethnography, and ethnography can be defined most simply as 'the close observation of particular lives in particular places'.[115] Ethnography relies on 'deep hanging out', informal conversations and intensive relationships developed over time.[116] For me, ethnography meant getting to know people, rather than conducting one-off interviews. It meant spending the day together, running errands, chatting, without necessarily thinking instrumentally about informal conversations as data – even as they were, in aggregate, the source of my deepest understanding. Ethnography meant becoming part of people's lives in enduring, committed and sometimes ethically complicated ways (as when Jason told me I was the best friend he had in Jamaica; or when people asked me to send money). In this project, ethnography blurs the border between research and everyday life, not because I was trying to 'go native' or to pretend not to be doing research, but because if you spend enough time with people, then 'the research' becomes part of your 'real life'.

For me, an ethnographic engagement amounts to friendship, with all the complexity and messiness implied. Ethnography means committing more of your time and more of yourself to research encounters because you think that is the best way to research a given topic ethically and responsibly. Clearly, in the case of deportation, there are many reasons why people might take time to open up, and perhaps the most compelling reason to engage ethnographically is because people simply will not tell you the most important things otherwise. In this ethnography I am definitely not concerned with representing 'a culture', as in many anthropological studies. Instead, I use ethnographic and life-story methods to critique the UK's immigration system.[117] The end result is a series of four ethnographic portraits, followed

by three slightly more theoretical chapters on citizenship, race and mobility.

Structuring the chapters as individual portraits allows for something richer than I could envisage with chapters organised thematically. When planning this book I had read several ethnographies of deportation and most of them were organised thematically and therefore chronologically – moving from initial migration, to experiences in school and at home, to criminalisation and prison, and then to deportation and post-deportation.[118] When reading these texts I often found it difficult to recognise and clearly remember different deported people from one chapter to the next. As Mitch Duneier argues:

> If you are going to get at the humanity of people, you can't just have a bunch of disembodied thoughts that come out of subjects' mouths in interviews without ever developing characters and trying to show people as full human beings. In order to do that it is useful to have a character that lives in a text.[119]

In *Deporting Black Britons* I want to develop characters, and to write in a way that makes remembering who is who easier.[120] Put simply, I want the stories to stick. Admittedly, structuring the next four chapters as individual portraits means that there are some missed opportunities for comparison. However, I hope that the engagement with each biography is more immersive this way, allowing the reader to become familiar with and to recognise Jason, Ricardo, Chris and Denico. Indeed, the four men are all invested in this book project, and they were motivated to tell me their stories in the hope that other people would not have to go through what they did. Like me, they hope the book will be read and that it will make a difference, however small.

## Chapter outline

In Chapters 2–5, I present the four ethnographic portraits, which focus primarily on processes of criminalisation, illegalisation

and meanings and experiences of racism in each of the men's lives. These four chapters question how and why each of the men was deported, developing several arguments about immigration controls from the perspective of their biographies. In Chapter 6, I turn to family and friends, using the findings from my research encounters in the UK to map out some of the hierarchies of both citizenship and non-citizenship in multi-status Britain. The book then moves away from Britain and approaches questions of race, citizenship and mobility in and from Jamaica. In Chapter 7, I develop critical theorisations of citizenship from the perspective of the 'deportee', arguing that citizenship is the global regime for the management of unequal populations. In Chapter 8, I examine the wider inter-state relations within which deportation is organised, and interrogate contemporary meanings of development in relation to the wider government of mobility. The Conclusion then ties together some of the key arguments from the preceding chapters, offering some final reflections and intimations of hope.

## A note on format

*Deporting Black Britons* offers intimate and personal accounts, and not all of the people featured in the book want to be identifiable. Two of the four men featured in Chapters 2–5 are anonymised, and I have avoided using pictures of faces unless people agreed. Moreover, I have used pseudonyms for all family and friends, including in directly quoted documents and reported speech, and have changed most place names in the UK. Additionally, in some of the quotes italic type is used to add emphasis, either because the individual emphasised these points in their speech, or because I want to highlight passages that are of particular relevance to my argument.

The book also tries to appeal to both academic and non-academic readers, which has been difficult. For the academic

reader, it means that much of the book's 'intellectual contri-
bution' remains implicit. Very few words are committed to
situating the argument in relation to wider intellectual debates,
even when I am trying to intervene in specific academic conver-
sations. Conversely, for the general reader there will be places
where the book takes a notably theoretical turn. However, I hope
that these sections are still interesting and that their political sig-
nificance is made clear. The endnotes offer further reading and
signposting for those interested, and they allow the text itself to
be less weighed down with academic positioning and posturing.
In any case, the binary between academic and non-academic is
perhaps unhelpful, partly an effect of the university's institu-
tional imperative to produce and sanction authorised knowledge.
In the end, I am concerned only with helping us see the problem
more clearly, so that we might challenge it more effectively.