

Things to Do

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FIVE PICTURES TO SEE AT

‘Windrush: Portrait of a Generation’

Over a year, Jim Grover photographed the first-generation Caribbean migrants living in Clapham and Brixton. Here, he tells the stories behind some of his shots



↑ Dominoes

‘On June 1 last year, I walked into the West Indian Association of Service Personnel club in Clapham and saw these men, who are mostly first-generation Caribbean migrants in their seventies and eighties, playing dominoes. They play three nights a week, arriving at 7pm and staying

until 2am. It’s a wonderfully calm, caring community punctured by explosive moments: when people yelp with excitement or slam the table, making the dominoes jump off. This is Zappy, George and Braithwaite playing for a round of drinks, and trust me, it’s much harder than it looks.’



← Family

‘This is a fairytale. Back in 1959, Hermine was sitting in Kingston Harbour about to board the SS Begonia to make the two-week journey to live in England. She started chatting to a guy called Lester who was about to board the same ship. They spent two weeks together on the ship and got married a year after they arrived. They lived in Brixton and had seven children, 19 grandchildren and 22 great-grandchildren. Sadly, Lester passed away in 2011, but every Friday, Hermine’s family still get together to eat food and catch up. Here, Hermine’s granddaughter, Krystyna, is plaiting her hair into cornrows before the evening starts. It was a beautiful thing to see. On that Friday there were four generations of family in the same room and they just picked up the conversation from the week before.’





← Faith

'For many West Indians faith is a really huge part of their lives, especially for Caribbean women. South London churches are full of first-generation migrants who went to Sunday school back in the Caribbean and learnt psalms by heart. This lady is called Monica: she came to London in 1964 to marry her husband. She has always been strong in her faith. In her home there are beautiful prayers on her kitchen door and a Bible next to her bed. On her bedroom wall her wedding photo is next to a picture of the crucifixion and her confirmation certificate. Together we worked out that she's made the journey from her home to her church in Clapham 5,000 times. Church is her community.'

'She's made the journey from her home to her church in Clapham 5,000 times'

↓ A Jamaican funeral

'For the Caribbean community, funerals are all about celebrating a life lived. People sing songs by the graveside and the men fill the grave up with earth and cover it with flowers. Then there's a big party. The lady in white is Diane. She was born in this country to Floris who came to London in the mid-1950s and worked for the NHS as a nurse. Floris

died in her Clapham home aged 84. Diane, who gave up her job to care for her mum at home, was determined to give her the best possible traditional Jamaican send-off. The crowning moment in Jamaican tradition is to give the departed their "final tot". Floris liked her little drop of Wray & Nephew Overproof, so here Diane pours the rum into her mum's grave.'



↗ The Jamaican home: the front room

'The West Indian home has this legendary thing called the "front room" and it's made it over into the houses of first-generation immigrants in Clapham and Brixton. It's a special room that's kept locked. There are portraits all over a wall, a china cabinet, a drinks bar and a radiogram. Someone joked to me: "If the Prime Minister came to your home, you'd have a cup of tea

in the kitchen. If the Prime Minister and the Queen came, you'd unlock the front room." It's incredibly hard to find an intact front room. This one belongs to a Jamaican couple who moved into the house in 1971. One of their daughters was born in this room. I love this picture because it captures a first generation tradition that might disappear over time. I love that the glass is cracked in the top right portrait. This is real life'. ■ As told to Alexandra Sims