



Photo by Jim Grover

# Documenting the Windrush generation

**C**lapham photographer Jim Grover has spent almost a year uncovering stories of the Caribbean community in south London. His new exhibition for the Oxo Gallery, *Windrush: Portrait of a Generation*, comes at an opportune time, with June 22 marking the 70th anniversary of the arrival of the Empire Windrush at Tilbury Docks.

The set of around 60 photographs portray the current lives and traditions of this first generation of Caribbean migrants, who settled in south London and are part of its vibrant community.

"I've been having a fantastic time," Jim told the *Weekender*. "My photography passion is telling stories about people in my local community, about things that people haven't seen or aren't aware of."

One of Jim's fellow churchgoers, from St James, is captain of the domino team in Clapham Manor Street. "I wandered into this club on a June evening, enthralled by it. There were lots of West Indian people, mostly men, mostly in their 60s to 80s, quietly enjoying each other's company until midnight or 1am," he said. "They have reggae music playing in background, a little bar, and they either drink rum or Red Stripe, or J20 or Lucozade. It's

a beautiful community."

While documenting the domino scene, Jim started picking up on aspects of the Caribbean culture. "Nine night is a type of funeral or wake where you go to the home and pay your respects on the ninth night after someone passing," Jim said.

"The more I searched, the more I thought there's a whole lot of traditions being held onto by the first generation of migrant in south London. They're keeping them alive, and that's fantastic and beautiful and precious."

In Clapham and Brixton Jamaicans predominate because when the Windrush arrived in 1948, Jamaican men were housed in a wartime air-raid shelter in Clapham south. If you were from Trinidad or Barbados you were sent to Notting Hill. "It's really important to document their lives because when this generation passes away, a lot of the things may start to disappear," Jim said.

The exhibition tells "the complete story, if you're from the Caribbean, in south London, right now," Jim said. "Men play dominoes, which they learn to play in Jamaica, and it's very competitive. Women are very strong in their faith, they go to church and make sure their children and grandchildren start out life going to church," he said.

"The Stockwell Good Neighbours have been meeting for 44 years. You have to be 60 to join and the oldest member is 103. They meet every Monday, do a bit of Tai Chi, eat Jamaican food, and chat. And there's always music. Everyone likes to dance."

Funerals are also distinctive. "They're very different; they're celebratory," Jim said. "There's specific traditions like pouring rum into the grave."

A staple of the Jamaican home is a front room, which is kept locked with lots of glass cabinets. "It was almost impossible to find a home with one," Jim said. "People were initially very wary of a stranger into their tight knit community but after ten months of doing it, doors began flying open."

"I was determined to find a front room, and a Windrusher, and I did."

Jim has a 92-year-old Windrush

survivor, from Leeds, attending the opening of his exhibition. "He's going to be my guest of honour," Jim said. "My images are a celebration of this community. I so respect them."

*Windrush: Portrait of a Generation* is at Gallery Oxo, Oxo Tower wharf, Bargehouse Street, SE1 9PH, from May 23-June 10.

Admission: free.

[www.jimgroverphotography.com](http://www.jimgroverphotography.com)



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