

How did the British people react to the immigrants?



Watch **keep Britain White** clip as a contextual starter for this sub topic, what are your thoughts?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ptJHO5oJfH4&t=1s>

By 1958 there were over 200,000 people from the New Commonwealth (group of former Empire colonies in a formal positive relationship rather than being ruled by Britain). This was a tiny number and if you lived in the countryside you might never see a foreign person. If you lived in Brixton or Notting Hill you certainly would.

1958 has been called the 'Summer of Violence' where the racial discrimination we've seen boiled over into violence.

Why do you think this happened?

- There had been an economic downturn, jobs were harder to come by – some white people blamed the immigrants for 'taking their jobs'
- The new gang culture was emerging amongst white teenagers (Mods, Rockers and Teddy Boys)

Watch this clip, how does it make you feel? Does it explain why the riots might have taken place?

Make some notes to discuss afterwards...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pFLQkC4ObXc>

We're going to visit some of the violence hotspots now, your job is as a journalist to make brief but helpful notes (for yourself) to later produce a news report on the violence in the summer of 1958...

Nottingham:

- A black miner was beaten up as he came out of the cinema with his wife
- 23 August – Fighting broke out for over an hour with whites and blacks in the St. Ann's Well Road area
- The MPs for Nottingham called for an end to black immigration to Britain



Notting Hill

- Notting Hill had one of the largest West Indian communities in Britain
- The extreme right wing fascist movement led by Oswald Mosley had already been involved in racist attacks against Jews in the 1930s tried to take advantage of the growing anger towards immigrants in the 1950s
- This group produced leaflets in Notting Hill calling for people to 'take action now...protect your jobs...stop coloured Immigration... Homes for white people'. The leaflets even had pictures of black people with spears entering Britain.

What do you think their point was with the spears?

- Late August 1958, gangs of around 400 Teddy Boys and other white youths launched two nights of attacks on black people and their property, even petrol bombing their houses

'Within half an hour the mob... had broken scores of windows and set upon two negroes who were lucky to escape with cuts and bruises. Women from top floor windows laughed as they called out to the thousand strong crowd, 'Go on boys, get yourself some blacks'.

An interview with Ivan Weekes
in the book Windrush, 1999

- The black population received no protection from the police. However, on the third night they fought back and then the police intervened to stop the fighting.





<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1PsNmTB4LEA>



'You are a minute and insignificant section of the population who have filled the whole nation with horror, indignation and disgust. Everyone, irrespective of the colour of their skin is entitled to walk through our streets in peace, with their heads held up and free from fear'.

What do you think this statement is?

A statement by the judge sentencing four white youths convicted of involvement in the Notting Hill violence of August 1958

Stick this source into your books and answer the following questions...



1. Why was this cartoon published on 2nd September 1958? (Clue think about the group led by Oswald Mosley)
2. What is the message of this source?
3. How reliable is this source as an indicator of what people in Britain thought of racial violence in 1958?

Stick this source in and annotate around it what you see and what you think the message is. Clue: Look at the clothing and think back to our teenagers lessons...

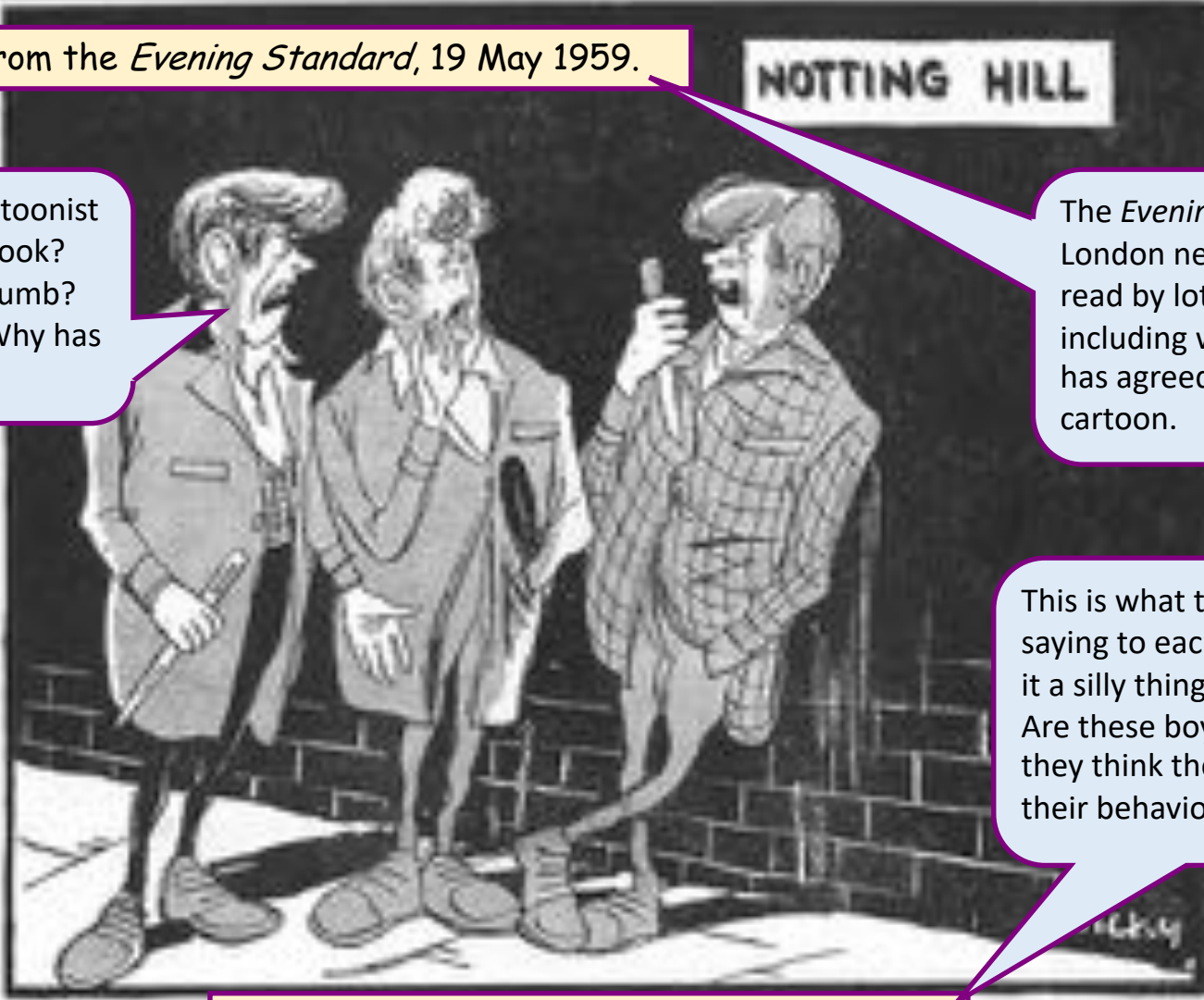
A cartoon from the *Evening Standard*, 19 May 1959.

How has the cartoonist made the boys look?
Clever or a bit dumb?
Nice or nasty? Why has he done this?

The *Evening Standard* is a London newspaper that is read by lots of people, including white people. It has agreed to print this cartoon.

This is what the boys are saying to each other. Why is it a silly thing to say? (Clue: Are these boys civilised, like they think they are? Look at their behaviour.)

They just ain't civilised - like we are ...!

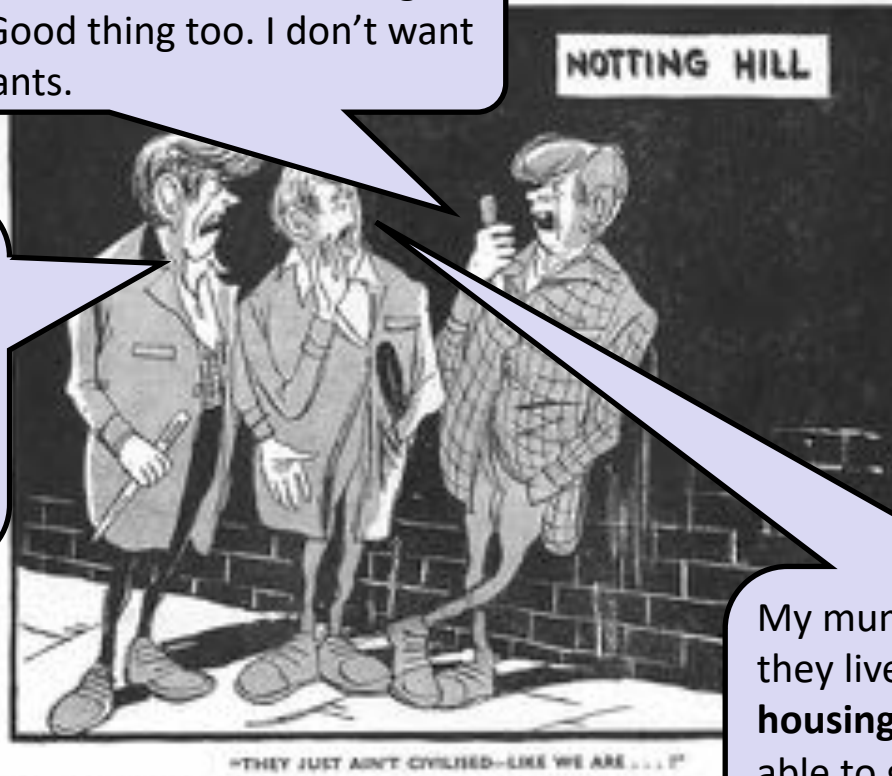


Imagine this was a scene in a movie about racial violence in the 1950s, write a short clip of what these boys might be saying to each other... Use all of your knowledge so far of the experiences of the immigrants...

Yeah – I keep seeing signs like **No Blacks, No Dogs** in hotels and restaurants. Good thing too. I don't want to share with no immigrants.

These immigrants are getting to know there's a **colour bar**. Whites are above the bar – we're better. They are below it.

Examples



My mum was telling me that they live in really **cramped housing** because they aren't able to get council housing. Serves them right. It's our country.

In May 1959, Kelso Cochrane, a carpenter from Antigua, was stabbed to death in Notting Hill by 6 white youths on his way home from a hospital appointment. The police never arrested the killers and were then accused of not doing enough. 1200 people turned up to Cochrane's funeral to show their anger and sorrow.

Most British people were appalled by the summer's violence, there were many of examples of local white people protecting their black neighbours. But it clearly shows Britain was on a knife edge...



What was the aftermath of Notting Hill?

When BBC reporters interviewed the people of Notting Hill, almost all the white and black people said positive things about their black or white neighbours. They blamed the violence on a tiny minority of black people who gave immigrants a bad name as well as white people intent on stirring up hatred in order to reduce immigration.

The black community largely felt the police had not done enough to protect them from the violence. This lack of trust between the Caribbean immigrants and the police continued for decades.

What is this?



Many people following the riots woke up to the fact that racism needed tackling. Some local communities took positive action and attempted to build better relations between black and white communities. Carnivals were set up and this, the Notting Hill carnival, became the biggest set up in 1959 and still going strong today as the biggest street party in Europe!

"We must pretend it doesn't exist".



This final task will set up our next topic on what the government would do about it.

Discuss in your areas, what is the message of this source?

The man on the left is Labour leader Harold Wilson

The man on the right is Conservative leader Sir Alec Douglas-Home