

Coming to England in 1966

I was born in Dominica in the West Indies in 1958. I was 8 years old when I came to England. My father came to England in the very early 60's.

My father worked in a factory making dog food. He made enough money to send for his wife (my mother) and my 2 brothers and sister. It was my choice to stay behind in the West Indies as I was very close to my Grandad and did not want to leave him.

My family sent for me in 1966. I remember waking up very early to make my way to the harbour with my mother's friend. I was dressed in my best clothes, and I remember wearing gold dangling earrings which were too heavy for my ear and was very painful.

It was very early in the morning, I remember getting on a cruise liner the biggest boat I had ever seen in my life with lots of people dressed in their finest clothes men in suits women wearing hats handbags, pretty dresses and high heels.

The cruiser was so big it was like an island. I stood on the deck and saw hundreds of tiny people, it looked like they were walking on water and I actually thought at the time that they were. We docked somewhere in America, I'm guessing it was New York where we stayed for the day did some shopping and returned to the boat. The next time we stopped we had arrived, which at the time I thought it was London but I now think it was probably in Southampton? From there we caught a train and me and my mums friend carried on to London.

My first feelings and thoughts of being in Britain was the cold, it must have been winter as it was very, very cold and I was not dressed for the weather.

My mother's friend lived in London and a taxi came to collect us from the station to her house in London. Travelling in the back of the taxi, I remember being very frightened, almost all the faces we passed were white, and that was very strange to me.

My mother came to London the following day to collect me and take me to Doncaster South Yorkshire, to reunite with my Dad, brothers and sister. It felt at the time like being introduced to strangers. I hated Doncaster as it was so cold, wet and miserable and the only black faces I saw was my mother's friends.

Rosalind John-Alao.

