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College Writing II

28 March 2023

Jamaican Migrants in New York City

In New York City, hundreds of thousands of Jamaicans live and work. Jamaican immigrants are among the most popular races migrating to the United States. Most Jamaicans migrate to the U.S. by international flights to reunite with their families and make a better living. Since Jamaicans moved to New York City, they have contributed to many different areas. Though most Jamaicans travel to the U.S. on a visiting visa, many have yet to return home because of better labor income. Throughout the years of immigration in the United States, Jamaicans have always been intrigued by the many opportunities New York City offers. Today Immigration has contributed to New York City in many ways. Jamaican immigrants have played an integral role in New York's diverse and thriving communities, making extensive contributions that benefit all.

During the early 20th century, New York City saw increased immigration wave patterns. In New York City, most West Indians who migrated to the metropolitan area were Jamaicans. According to Audebert, "...**Jamaicans** (39 percent), Haitians (22 percent) and Trinidadians (14 percent)..." This statistic demonstrates that Jamaicans are almost the head of diversity in New York City because, believe it or not, we can find a Jamaican in every area of this city. Because of variety and high demand in our communities of New York City, Audebert states, "This mosaic is exemplified in Central Brooklyn where **Jamaicans**, Haitians, Trinidadians, and Barbadians make up respectively 31 percent, 26 percent, 16 percent and 6 percent of the 273,600 individuals...."

These statistics show how diversified the communities are in New York City, not to mention other metropolitan areas in the United States. Due to the massive diversity in New York City, Lorenzi, and Batalova state, “ While the Caribbean immigrant population tripled in size between 1980 and 2010, its growth rate had declined by 2019.” Residential areas in New York City have grown intensively; however, there has been a slight decline recently.

New York City has grown immensely. Job opportunities that different companies in the U.S. offered have contributed to this. Lorenzi and Batalova said, “After World War II, U.S. companies heavily recruited thousands of English-speaking ‘W2’ contract workers from Bahamas, **Jamaica**, and Barbados to fill critical health care and agriculture jobs.” These opportunities have caused Jamaicans and other West Indian groups to migrate to the U.S. and reside there legally. Most Jamaicans have migrated to New York City because of Job opportunities, to reunite with their families, and to have a better quality of life. Even though most Jamaicans arrived here differently, Miller states, “ 93 percent of Jamaican immigrants in New York City entered the country between 1990 and 1999 with a family-preference visa.” Most Jamaicans have migrated to the U.S. by air or sea because of their families.

During the immigration surge in New York City, Jamaicans made a significant effort to move into the city, contributing to New York's diversity. Adam states, “ Yet these northeast Bronx neighborhoods are home to one of the largest concentrations of Jamaicans in the city, with Crown Heights and East Flatbush, Brooklyn.” Based on statistics Jamaican population has brought massive diversity to New York City, which has contributed to the communities growth in many ways. The school system in New York is very diversified by West Indian immigrants, which brought a positive motive to the education system. Adam said, “Before Arnold Anderson, a 71-year-old former mathematics teacher, left Jamaica 30 years ago, ‘we were poor,’ he said

simply. Today, all seven of his children have college degrees and are homeowners.” There have been positive outcomes for Jamaican migrants in the City of New York. Education has played an essential role in all migrants' lives, complementing their culture.

Jamaican migrants have blessed New York with cultural practices, food, and festive activities. Other New Yorkers greatly appreciate Jamaican food because of its delicious spice and flavor. Adam says, “ There is the odd hole-in-the-wall serving up fiery jerk chicken, or a greengrocer with ten kinds of exotic yams on his shelves.” Jamaican food is well known and demanding in New York City to the point of having it in every borough where we may find ourselves. Jamaican food may be popular but also their traditional activities, for example, sports and festivities. Adam says, “Cricket matches can be glimpsed in Van Cortlandt Park on summer afternoons” This reminds me of home; every evening after school or work, everyone would gather for football and cricket matches throughout the communities. From the cultural backgrounds of Jamaicans to their migration process into significant cities around the world, this truly makes them unique.

Throughout Jamaican history, research shows they migrate to New York City and London. Many might not know, but the British initially colonized Jamaica, which made it a gateway for them into England. According to Foner, “Britain was the destination for thousands of Jamaicans in the 1950s and early 1960s partly because the 1952 McCarren- Walter Act made it so difficult for Jamaicans to move to the United States.” Jamaican mass migration began after World War II when most Jamaicans needed better jobs, higher wages, and a better lifestyle. Due to the British policies at the time, most Jamaicans could migrate to London without immigration processing. These great opportunities it had allowed most Jamaicans to improve their lives and was able to provide for their families.

Jamaican migrants' living conditions in London were much better than those in their home country. However, though this was a better life for Jamaicans, they continued to face a racial fight against them because they were black. Foner states, "As members of a racial minority group, they were subject to prejudice and discrimination of a sort they had not encountered back home." Even though Jamaicans were mainly black, in London, they had started to experience racial fights against them, which would prevent them from certain revelries. In the Country of Jamaica, most Jamaicans were black. However, they were also white or European. Based on Foner's statistics, "76 percent were classified as pure African and fewer than one percent as pure white or European." Today, Jamaicans have many mixed races, resulting from the mixture of African and white. Even though they were black or a combination of black and white, they faced discrimination in London and New York City.

After Jamaica gained independence, the immigration volume in Britain declined. Foner's record states, "The Commonwealth Immigration Act of 1962 changed the composition and volume of the immigration." After Jamaican independence in 1962, Britain struck down opportunities for Jamaicans to enter their country freely. Jamaican Immigrants began migrating to the United States after Britain had taken their opportunities away. Foner states, "Jamaican immigration snowballed as soon as it went into effect, going from 2,743 in 1966 to 10,483 in 1967." After the U.S. adjusted, its immigration laws caused Jamaicans to emigrate rapidly. Jamaicans began to move into metropolitan areas, especially New York City. Foner says that "...about 100,000 in the New York metropolitan area...." resides during this period. Jamaicans began to live and work in the city's boroughs, especially Brooklyn and the Bronx. Today most of the communities in the North Bronx and East Flatbush, Brooklyn area have a high concentration of Jamaican immigrants who reside legally and illegally in the United States.

Jamaicans have become predominant in the Metropolitan area, contributing to the city in many ways. Brooklyn and the Bronx are where most Jamaican immigrants reside. Adam states, "...while Brooklyn remains the great magnet for the bulk of Jamaican immigrants, the Bronx is the more distinct way station on their road to middle-class solidity." Therefore most Jamaicans migrated to the Bronx for labor reasons and a middle-class lifestyle. The Bronx had allowed most Jamaican immigrants to buy a house instead of rent because of its middle-class areas. Adam says, "...street after street of plain but solid single-family brick houses, attractive to strivers looking to own rather than rent." Most Jamaican migrants who arrive in the U.S. ensures that they get settled in a higher-wage job and eventually buy a house. Most Jamaicans are used to this because of their way of life. Most Jamaicans adjust to New York City's lifestyle reasonably quickly but continue to miss their country's quality of life.

As a Jamaican immigrant, I came to the United States at age sixteen with my Mother, Step-Father, and younger brother. After arriving in the United States, I quickly identified the incredible opportunities available. I spent two years of High School, Graduated with Honors, and in one semester, I held a high GPA in the entire school. After this, I realized that the Jamaican education system was much more complex than the U.S. because of how straightforward most courses were. After graduating, I went to the United States Navy, which allowed me to serve in my country of residence. In military training, I met many folks who had never spoken to or seen a black person before, which at first was very awkward but eventually got better. The United States military has given me many opportunities to travel and learn as I get better at what I do best. Most immigrants joining the U.S. Armed Forces can testify to the benefits and the urge to serve once they enter this country. After returning home eight months later, my family missed me

dearly. Deep down within me, I knew I had accomplished a great thing and was an achiever, no matter the challenges that may come my way.

Returning to New York City, a new page of my life began in NYC EMS (Emergency Medical Services). I became an EMT-B (Emergency Medical Technician- Basic Life Support) for City, working under the FDNY 911 system. As an immigrant working in the streets of New York, it has opened my eyes to so many ways diversity and immigration have affected this city.

Working in the city has made me a better version of myself and motivated me to serve the United States as an African American. After two years of preparing my mind for tertiary-level education, I finally gained the confidence to start my Bachelors's in the Fall of 2022. As I remain proficient in my full-time Job as an Emergency Medical Technician and as a US Navy active reserve, I continue to hold a high standard in my school work. My life has protrade the life of most successful Jamaican immigrants. As a Jamaican of my fore-parents, I know that entering a land of opportunities is a great pleasure; however, making the best of it is very important.

Finally, Jamaican immigrants have contributed to New York City, benefiting everyone. Most people living in central Brooklyn now are from Jamaica, Haiti, Trinidad, and Barbados—emigration to New York City to find employment, family reunion, and improved quality of life. Jamaicans have also made contributions to New York City's educational system. Jamaican migrants have introduced traditional customs, cuisine, and celebrations to New York. Jamaicans continue to experience discrimination due to their mixed racial identities throughout the mass immigration opportunity. As a result, Jamaicans started moving to the Bronx in search of work and middle-class lifestyles. Living in and contributing to the United States of America was tremendously advantageous to me as a young Jamaican immigrant. Jamaican immigrants' culture and extraordinary diversity have tremendously impacted New York City.

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