a HOME away from HOME

GREATER HARTFORD’S WEST INDIAN DIASPORA

The West Indian community made this converted multi-family house at 353 Barbour St their first location until they moved to Main St in 1971.

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The University of Connecticut:
Africana Studies Institute
El Instituto: Institute of Latina/o, Caribbean, and Latin American Studies
The Caribbean Interdisciplinary Research and Outreach Initiative (CIROI)
The West Indian Social Club of Hartford
The West Indian Social Club was officially formed in February 1950. With the help of the late Attorney Leon Podorowsky, the club was incorporated in October of 1950 and established their home base at 353 Barbour Street in Hartford. John Richardson served as the organization's first President, followed by David Mills. Because membership of the club was restricted to males, women who wanted to join the organization formed the Ladies Auxiliary in 1954. Mrs. Connie Mills served as the Ladies Auxiliary's first President.
In 2010, West Indians surpassed all other ethnic groups to become the largest population of foreign-born immigrants in Connecticut. This demographic trend was eight decades in the making, with the original kernel of this population arriving as guest workers in the Hartford region in the 1940s through bilateral labor agreements between British West Indian colonies and the United States.

By the time these war-time labor opportunities appeared, a significant West Indian population had settled in New York, a population that had already reached 54,000 thousand by the 1930s. In Connecticut, the draw was primarily the tobacco industry which benefited from the labor distributed through the industrial and agricultural concessions made for war-time. The diaspora of West Indian laborers established a post-emancipation labor tradition that created new spaces to recast and renegotiate the labor of black men and later, women.

Some of these guest workers married African-American women, forming a nascent West Indian community. Facing discrimination, they founded their own social, religious and athletic organizations as autonomous cultural spaces and networks beginning with the West Indian Social Club in 1950, followed by the Caribbean American Society, the Barbados American Society, the Trinidad & Tobago American Society, the Jamaica Progressive League, the St Lucia American Society and the Cricket Hall of Fame among others.

This exhibit explores the rich tapestry of West Indian immigration narratives about belonging, heritage, place-making and identity-formation in Connecticut. Through oral histories and local community archives, the exhibit recounts stories that are at once personal and collective, universal and kaleidoscopic, revelatory yet still often unknown.
West Indians were most visible as thousands disembarked from ships, buses, and trains for work in Connecticut in the 1940s and 1950s. Thereafter, they lived and worked in labor camps outside of the public's eye. The Hartford Courant kept the workers' experiences visible through articles and editorials on work conditions, the fate of the tobacco industry, diplomatic relationships between Great Britain and the United States, and the leisure and cultural life of West Indian migrants.
The early Ladies Auxiliary was composed of West Indian women and many of the American wives of West Indian men. Women worked hard and arranged many social functions like teas, talent shows, trips, dances, game days, dinners and beauty pageants, all of which brought revenue into the club. The women voiced their concerns about their second class status in light of their continued dedication and hard work. President Leslie Perry advocated for women to be full members of the club despite opposition in the ranks of the existing membership and notes this cultural shift as one of the proudest achievements during his tenure.

In 1980, the Ladies Auxiliary merged with the general membership of the organization. Rosemarie Tate, who later served as Secretary of the organization, became the first official female member of the organization. The merger fostered opportunities for women’s leadership in the male-dominated organization. Hartford Council woman, the Hon. Veronica Airey-Wilson was elected in 1989 as the organization’s first female president. She was followed by other female leaders which includes: Alred Dyce, Phd; Doreth Flowers, Doreen Forest, Marva Wilks, Attorney and Nicole Gordon. Doreen Forest now leads the organization in her third turn at the presidency.
By the end of World War II over 40,000 workers from the Bahamas, Jamaica, Barbados, Saint Vincent, Saint Lucia, and Dominica had contributed to the manpower shortages in the United States. They labored in nearly 1,500 localities in thirty-six states. Approximately 16,000 worked in industrial occupations.

Noel Elliot recounts working in tobacco:

"I work on the farm outside in the summer 'til about... reaping time for tobacco... you've got to put it in the shed, take it in the shed and school kids come from all over—Pennsylvania—kids here to sort tobacco, putting in the shed and at nights you've got to stay with the tobacco. They make a fire in there where you cure the tobacco. You've got to stay there all night with it where you would take shifts. And when the tobacco is ready, 'I'd say to harvest it out in the shed, then we got a lot of people, even the school kids come back, and take the tobacco... to the warehouse and... we have a sweat room. After you sweat the tobacco, that's where you cure the tobacco. And when it's cured, you have... to measure the tobacco. They have some trough that you—in front of you and the tobacco is here. They're all different sizes, so you pick up one and any hole that seems fit, drop it. So you have to go through that until... when it's cold, because you've got to prepare the field... You go dig manhole, make sure the wiring that you put the nets over is well secured. So that time is—the weather is cold and maybe—January, February, March, April. April—[it] is still cold but you've got to be on the farm. And that time you've got to put on a lot of warm clothes, and that time now we transfer from the summer camp to the winter camp."
Cricket played an important role in cultivating a sense of cultural pride and heritage for Caribbean immigrants to the new England area in the 1950s, eventually drawing teams from New York, Massachusetts, and Connecticut into a close alliance. Mastering a game whose colonial heritage once smelled of elitism and racial hierarchy now became one of the most important cohesive mechanisms for West Indians to proclaim and maintain their heritage in the United States. Now Connecticut boasts the Cricket Hall of Fame, and old timers and new recruits carry on this important symbol of Caribbean history, culture, endurance, and athleticism.

Noel Elliot tells how he became captain of the West Indian Social Club Cricket team and how the club created a bond among West Indians:

"[My brother Ferdinand] wrote me and tell me they trying to get a cricket club together, so I must bring myself some gears. So that's '49. So when I came back here [Hartford] '50 I was just in time to play with the West Indian Social Club. They just formed a team . . . I play with them. Just as I came from Jamaica, they go to Keeney Park, a couple of games we practiced and then afterward we started to play against Boston . . . They didn't have no captain. I captain—started captain for them. After I came back, I go there a couple of times. "Oh, we have a good cricketer," because there wasn't many cricketers around. I take over the team as a captain. And we start to play against Boston. So every other Sunday—just about every other Sunday we . . . [were] in Boston or Boston was here, because—until we venture out to get with—play with New York. Then they start to form other clubs here. There is the Sportsman, the Barbadian [much later on towards the 1970s]. That club was the only one club—the West Indian Social Club. So you have guys from Barbados, Jamaica and you're altogether, form one team."
The Miss West Indian Scholarship Pageant was launched in 1962 and has featured prominently in annual programming of the West Indian Social Club. The pageant provides an opportunity for young women between the ages of 16 and 20 to compete for the coveted title of Miss West Indian and to secure scholarships for college. In 1978 and 1979, young men entered the pageant; thus the male and female winners were given the title of Mr. and Miss West Indian respectively. Later, a Memorial Scholarship honoring past members such as Neiman Fraizer, Lowell Sutherland, and Basil Wollaston was established for the young men. With the exception of 1989 and 2005, the West Indian Social Club of Hartford has crowned a queen every year.

The queen faithfully represents the organization during the Independence Celebration activities as well as other social programs. During approximately 8 weeks of training, the young ladies are tutored in pageantry techniques, public speaking, and leadership skills all of which culminate in the grand affair. The pageant participants must be of good academic standing. They are judged in areas including pre-pageant interview, talent, writing an essay, introduction, evening wear, and the dutch pot question (question and answer). Prizes are awarded for most talented, best essay, as well as other categories.
CELEBRATING 65 YEARS OF THE WISC
This annual parade started to commemorate the independence of the Caribbean islands.

ESTABLISHED IN 1962
CELEBRATIONS
OVER THE YEARS

1978

1980

1976
Keith Carr Sr., who emigrated to Hartford, CT from Kingston, Jamaica in the 1950s, was an enduring, inimitable presence in the Greater Hartford community for over 40 years. After an initial sojourn in Connecticut's shade tobacco fields and a stint in New York with his brother, Mr. Carr settled in Hartford and got married to Delores Morgan in the 1960s. He and Delores raised three children: Keith Jr., Kurt and, Glynda.

Carr remained deeply connected to Jamaica, writing occasional articles for Jamaica's newspaper, The Gleaner, and serving as part of their distribution network so that new immigrants could keep abreast of what was happening in their former homes. By 1962, he was active in the West Indian Social Club, then celebrating its 12th anniversary and embarking on a mission to commemorate West Indian Independence. He played a prominent role in the West Indian Independence Celebration Committee since its establishment in 1962, appearing at several official signings of the declaration of West Indian week with various mayors and governors.

Carr played cricket with the West Indian Club and soccer with the Trojans, a team organized by Mr. Fitzroy Parkinson. He traveled throughout the northeast playing and promoting cricket. Athletics would remain a fundamental part of the activities he nurtured. After joining the West Indian Social Club in 1963, he would go on to hold the position of assistant secretary, secretary, public relations chair, second vice-president, and first vice president before becoming president of the West Indian Social Club.

Grooming leaders and building connections between commercial, corporate, and civic organizations featured prominently in Mr. Carr's vision of community development. He believed firmly in maintaining West Indian cultural heritage from one generation to the next by investing in the youth, a mission he was able to promote in his various roles at the West Indian Foundation. There, his legacy lives on in the Keith L. Carr, Sr. Scholarship Endowment Fund which awards an annual scholarship through the Foundation.

Mr. Carr could be seen walking from one end of Hartford to the other—his formidable head of hair and his smile, announcing his presence even to those who did not know him by name. He traipsed over to Trinity College, down to Aetna, or the public library. He crisscrossed Albany Avenue in his role as Merchant Coordinator for the Upper Albany Merchants Association and visited the Jamaica Progressive League and other locales for Friendship Night, when all the social organizations meet at rotating locations. Here a scholarship is also established in his name to honor him as the founder of Friendship Night. Wherever he went, his mission and his vision of building, uplifting, and promoting Caribbean heritage and culture were always with him.

The exhibit, of which this commemorative panel is a part, was in many ways the brainchild of Keith Carr, who believed firmly that the West Indian community should be stewards and trustees of their own history and cultural heritage. Mr. Carr died on 7 January 2008.
**VIOLA WIMBISH & WINIFRED CARTER: FRIENDS AT HOME AND ABROAD**

Viola Wimbish and Winfred Carter worked as domestics when they left school in The Bahamas. There were few opportunities to go overseas and Viola remembers thinking at one point that “New York was the end of the world.” She could not imagine someone going to the United States and not liking it although this was the very experience of one of her classmates. She ended up in a domestic position at one of the cottages that catered to tourists and there she met Winifred Carter. It was a fortuitous meeting because Winifred’s employer had asked her if she knew anyone who could cook and Viola had had some training as a cook. Winifred and Viola jumped at the opportunity to go overseas and their employer, Frank O. H. Williams arranged the necessary visas and flights. They had to fly to Miami and take a train to New York. Viola was so unfamiliar with American race relations that when she noted that there was a special railroad car for “colored,” she actually thought she was getting extra-special treatment.

**HORACE & FAY CLARKE JOHNSON: A NEW CLASS OF IMMIGRANTS**

Unlike many of the migrants who had come to Hartford in the 1940s and 1950s, Fay and Horace Johnson came to the Hartford area already well-educated and pursuing professional careers. They first pursued educational opportunities in Canada before relocating to the Hartford area. The agricultural industry still provided thousands of West Indians with work but new kinds of West Indian immigrants were also entering the United States. The new waves of migrants, like their earlier counterparts, worked hard and aspired to make something meaningful of their lives. They bought property and started moving out of Hartford to Bloomfield and Windsor. These new migrants were well-educated and given the growth of the population there were even more entrepreneurs and business people among the cohort of the 1960s and 1970s than there had been in the previous two decades. Horace Johnson would later become the president of the West Indian Social Club and Fay Clarke Johnson penned an important book documenting the early experiences of West Indian migrant farm workers, Soldiers of the Soil.
Mr. Donald Crafton Dorman came to the United States in the 1940s through the War Manpower Act that attempted to address labor shortages in American agriculture and industry. Like the many thousands of Jamaican immigrants, Mr. Dorman’s work ethic led to assignments in Windsor, Connecticut. He returned to the United States in the 1950s including a posting in Louisiana. While others eventually settled down in the northeast, he had grand entrepreneurial visions back home in Jamaica. He leveraged his travels in the United States for business ventures such as farming and opening a shop. He and his wife, Icolene, knew each other well when they were growing up because she went to school in Maggoty District, St. Elizabeth. They kept in touch throughout his travels by mail and in 1961 he came to Kingston to take her on a memorable date, a black and white film about the Everly Brothers.

They raised their family until he was tragically killed. While we do not get to know the end of Mr. Dorman’s ambitious life, the possibilities were boundless for a man who had an expansive vision of the world and his place in it. Those who know him well recounted that he loved his children and cared for his growing family. He lived an exuberant, boundless, fearless life full of passion, a pattern—a joie-de-vivre—his family tries to duplicate. His trunk represents an important artifact of his travel from what was then the British West Indies (BWI) to the United States.
Veronica Airey Wilson and her siblings came to the United States in 1962. The three of them each came with a chicken their grandmother cooked them. She had fairy tale notions of America none of which prepared her for the extreme cold of the winter and the mean spiritedness of the children when they went to school. They were teased incessantly because their clothes never matched, their hair styles were different, and because they answered too many questions in class. She and her brother were beaten up every day. The beatings finally stopped when Veronica made friends in the third grade with a new Jamaican girl, Elaine who defended her. They were never bothered again. Veronica and Elaine remain close to this day. Veronica also remembers during the 1960s being forced by the school to go to speech classes to get rid of her accent—in keeping with the idea of a melting pot. It was only in the 1970s and thereafter that the school system abandoned these efforts.

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Veronica Airey participating in the Miss West Indian pageant. She would later on become president of the club and Deputy Mayor of the city of Hartford.
Like many of the early immigrants to the Hartford area, Edwin Carty has dedicated his life to serving his local community through his church, social clubs and other organizations. He is one of the founders of the Caribbean American Society of Hartford, twice serving as president from 1971-1975 and 1992-1993. In 1962 he was one of the four founders of the West Indian Independence Day Celebration/Parade, was an adviser to the Caribbean American Society's Capitol Region Boy Scout Troop #473, and is a member of the Jamaica Ex-Police Association and an elder in the First Presbyterian Church of Hartford. Mr. Carty's magnanimous personality and generous spirit has led the community to call upon him to emcee many anniversary and other community events.

Mr. Carty recounts the founding of the Caribbean American Society

"[W]hen we came here the only place you could find to go to was the movie theatre or a nice little house party on a Saturday night until finally the West Indian Club... at 353 Barbour Street... they... play dominos, to eat patties, they cook curry goat and then about 1957 there were a few people... headed by primarily Mr. Jethro Williams... who... broke away from the West Indian Club... because he had an idea of another organization... It was birthed in his living room at 9 Acton Street... He was a more religious type of a person and wanted a more cohesive group type organization. And it was not by accident that the name society was used as opposed to club. And the other thing that he stressed was that they would refer to the members of it as brothers and sisters. So you'd call each other by the name Brother Carty, Brother Jones, Brother Brown, Brother Williams, Brother Anderson, as you go along. That organization was born in September of '57. And grew with about eight or nine people. And it grew one time to close to three hundred members... We were the first organization to put on an annual dance. And that was held at the Bond Hotel down there on Asylum Street. And we were also the first organization to sell tickets in advance in the city of Hartford for an affair. Other people might not want to believe it but that is the truth."
The story of Narciso Airey's family represents what scholars call circum-Caribbean migration, internal migration flows that brought British West Indians as laborers to other Caribbean and Central American locales such as Cuba, Panama, and Honduras. After working in Cuba during the early decades of the twentieth century, Airey's parents had to flee violence targeted at Anglphone workers, only to face a similar fate in Honduras a few years later. By the 1930s approximately 28,000 British West Indians were born in Cuba, 11,000 in Panama, and 4,000 in Honduras. Airey was one of many thousands born elsewhere in the Caribbean who returned home as youngsters to Jamaica.

Narciso Airey worked with his parents to operate the family's farming and baking businesses until he got an opportunity in his '20s to work in America during World War II. The War Food Administration posted West Indian men throughout the US, and Airey ended up in Salem, New Jersey. He worked for six months in a factory reloading spent ammunition. The work ethic of men like Airey made a good impression on American farmers and industrialists seeking to expand their use of temporary immigrant labor in the post-war period.

Airey returned to America in 1951, this time for farm work in Florida and then in Connecticut's shade tobacco industry on assignment with Coleman Brothers in Granby. "We were glad for the opportunity again because . . . most of the work was piecework . . . you earn as your ability to produce. I started picking tobacco, carrying it where the truck can get it. The wage per bushel . . . was small, but we put in a lot of time . . . You get ten cents more—so I went to school in Granby for driving and I got my license and I started to drive. So that give me a little more money and I drive the guys to work, back and forth.

Airey is pictured with his daughters Doreen and Veronica (above right) and Phyillis (below).
Sydney Barnett recounts his experience at the immigration office:

"[At the] Immigration Office in 1950 . . . when that white man purged me, the only thing left for him to ask me was the day I was born out of my mother. [He wasn’t] nice to me, period. . . . I remember my temper rise up at one question. He said to me, “You all come here to work for money. Why you want to remain in the country; why you want to stay here?” I said, “I beg your pardon? You know, we didn’t come here for money . . . We came here to work and never you forget that. We prepared food, materials and other things to protect you while the American soldiers were there fighting in the war. We sleep in mattress, straw mattress among snakes to work.” And he closed the book. I tell you, he closed the book. . . . He never asked me another question. . . . He took me into a room . . . where they take the fingerprints. I’ll never forget it. I was so mad and nervous I spoiled two of the fingerprint. My finger couldn’t stay in it; they were all spoiled all over. And they said if you spoil they next one, I’m going to push you through the door."

In addition to his foundational role at the West Indian Social Club, Sydney Barnett dedicated his life to service in the greater Hartford community through his lodge, his calypso band, his choir and a host of other social clubs and organizations.

"I belonged to nine organizations in this community . . . I believe in joining them, work with them, establish with them for the benefit of our race . . . I get into politics. My last big job was . . . to create a health center . . . with the Clay Hill Improvement Association. I was the president and a founder and we . . . put a health center in our area to help the poor people . . . . I was a director on the board for 27 years. That’s the way I live—that’s my life. The post office at North Hartford—the first two years in the ’50s, I joined the organization. That’s the first time before I get involved that deeply with the West Indian Club."

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Sydney Barnett: A Man of Service

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COMING OF AGE IN HARTFORD

Like West Indians in the 1940s and 1950s, many African-Americans had migrated north in search of better opportunities. Both migration waves underscore the quintessential quest for a better life that spurs people to leave their birth places. They followed a family member, a job opportunity, or a friend. Florence Wollaston’s father, Mr. Kiser, moved to the Hartford area where he had an uncle and sought work. It was a permanent move for he soon settled down, got married, and raised his family in Hartford.

Florence Wollaston recalls how her parents moved around in the 1940s trying to find the right apartment in Hartford. Not only was it difficult for African-Americans to find suitable places to live, when they did find accommodations for rent they were often not in the best conditions. Her family lived up and down Kenton street in the 1940s. She remembers how her street would be flooded by the Connecticut River at the intersection of Canton and Bellevue streets and how her father helped to build the dike to prevent these floods. There was no heat and hot water; ice had to be bought from the trucks on the street and clothes had to be ironed with a heavy metal iron. Each move the Wollaston family made was in search of a better place to live.

She recalls the razing of homes on Paviion, Kenton and Wooster street to make way for the Bellevue Square housing project. Moving to Bellevue Square between 1943 and 1944 was a dream come true for the Kiser family. Playing tennis and spending many hours at the playground were among the memories that stood out during her childhood years at Bellevue Square. These poignant memories of the “projects” are crucial because they show that at particular moments these housing projects did represent an upward move for many African-Americans who were hard-pressed, like the Kiser family, to find proper accommodations in the 1940s and 1950s. The establishment of Bellevue square filled a dire need for suitable housing with the right amenities. She lived in apartment 54 C with heat and hot water for the first time. Moving to Bellevue Square was one of the most memorable events and happiest moments in Florence Wollaston’s life.

WORKING TOBACCO AND MEETING WEST INDIANS

From age 13 to 16 Florence Kiser Wollaston spent part of her summers working with her mother on the tobacco farms. She provides details about the extensive and laborious process of tobacco production from planting, weeding, smoking, and curing through to the final shipment from the warehouse. It was here on the farms that she first encountered West Indians. She was wary of them at first. After all, they were men who spoke a language unfamiliar to her. Florence recalled one day when the snow fell that the West Indian men who saw it said, “Sugar is falling from the sky.” Her mother made it easier to understand what the men were saying and sometimes on weekends she invited some of the men to her home, cooked meals for them, and made them feel at home. It was during these crucial weekends, when Mrs. Kiser extended her hospitality and opened her heart to these men, that Florence grew accustomed to West Indians. For West Indian men and women, the kindness, hospitality, and friendship of the African American community blunted some of the difficulties of being far away from home.

Wollaston is pictured here at various social events at the West Indian Social Club, with a friend at a Bond Hotel locale (in black and white) for an Underwood Corporation gathering and with officers the WISC Women’s Auxiliary.
Kenneth P. Bennett Sr. grew up on a farm in Clarendon, Jamaica. His family grew coffee, sugarcane, cocoa, and raised goats, pigs, and cattle. For many Caribbean communities, wartime restrictions on imports and exports created economic hardships for residents who depended on farming, small trades like carpentry, shop keeping, tailoring, and the tourist industry.

Bennett, when he was just 20 years old, was among the thousands of men recruited to fill manpower shortages throughout the northeastern United States. He and thousands of British West Indian men braved the dangers of war to travel by ship to work in the agricultural and industrial sector. Bennett was among the 8,244 men to arrive in 1943. That number had grown to almost 21,000 by 1945. He was assigned to a canning factory in New York. Later, he moved to Connecticut to work in the shade tobacco industry then secured a job as a machinist.

Bennett met his future wife Eva Mae McDowell on a tobacco farm. Eva, a student at North Carolina Central University, had moved north to work seasonally like thousands of local young people and other students from the South. The couple lived in Hartford before relocating to Bloomfield. In addition to his job as a machinist, they embarked on many entrepreneurial ventures including purchasing rental properties and starting a catering business, Bennett Caterers, in 1961. Both of them were committed to civic engagement and service to the town of Bloomfield as well as the Greater Hartford region and Jamaica, including the local municipal government, their local church, and organizations like the Urban League and the NAACP. They were lifetime members of the West Indian Social Club from its early days at Barbour Street to its Main Street location. They gave generously of their time while raising nine children.

Bennett's story is one of cementing a life: meeting his great love, finding his vocation as a machinist, pursuing various successful and entrepreneurial endeavors, rearing his family, sponsoring other family members, and contributing to his community. He navigated America's changing racial, social, and economic landscape with discipline, hard work, and respect. He moved to Bloomfield to secure a safer space and better educational opportunities for his children. One of his white neighbors gladly spoke to him when he initially thought he was the grounds keeper, only to be inhospitable when he learned a black man was moving next door. These and other bigotries and indignities, the Bennetts bore with grace by following the mantra:

**YOU DO THE BEST YOU CAN TO ALL THE PEOPLE YOU CAN AND AS LONG AS YOU CAN.**
PAIN, PASSION, PURPOSE

Like many West Indian immigrants before her, Barbara Frankson spent her formative childhood years with her grandmother, Catherine Elizabeth Douglas, whose eleven children sought better opportunities in England and the United States. As a wife and a widow, Douglas did what countless West Indian women had done since the era of slavery to support their families and gain a measure of economic autonomy: she became a market woman. In rural St. Catherine, Jamaica, she reared cows and goats, vegetables, fruits, and coffee. When it was time to go to market she hopped on the trucks and bartered for what she and her family needed. Barbara's childhood was filled with the vision of this pillar of a strong woman whose devotion to her family was second only to her instrumental relationship with God. Her walk with God solidified a powerful legacy of perseverance and commitment that Barbara would need on a difficult emotional journey to adulthood.

Despite a childhood filled with love and faith, Barbara felt the separation from her mother, Jane Adlin, at just three years old. Although a Jewish family from West Hartford, CT sponsored the entire family, it was six years before Barbara would be reunited with her mother. Jane worked tirelessly in two separate jobs as a part-time and a full-time live-in domestic. These two positions exposed a young Barbara to every fault line in the intersection of race, ethnicity, and the history of American immigration. From a small home with dirt floors, Barbara eventually ended up living in two locations: a spacious 4811 square foot home in West Hartford where her mother chose the privacy of the attic rather than the main floor. They entered the home from the rear entrance. Although Jane's employer treated her well, Barbara and her brother, Tacius, were not immune from other whites in West Hartford who questioned their presence, especially the local police who constantly harassed him.

At Hall High School, there were 16 minorities in her graduating senior class of 1980s and she was the only black student with a local West Hartford address. She was forced to attend speech therapy to get rid of her accent and her local African American peers bussed in from Hartford bullied her, made fun of her ethnic heritage, her accent, and her hair long before it was considered cool to be Jamaican. She avoided public speaking until her mother twice encouraged her to participate in the Miss West Indian Pageant. She found refuge in her weekend home off Albany Avenue in Hartford where she socialized with other kids, played double Dutch, and went to church with both her Baptist grandmother and Seventh Day Adventist mother. She recalls a close-knit neighborhood that had the feeling of a small village where everyone looked out for each other's children, knew each other's name, and felt safe despite the obvious poverty of some of the residents.

Soon misfortune struck the family: her mother's fatal diagnosis of colon cancer, separation from her grandmother who had to be relocated to Florida, and a stint of homelessness challenged her faith. Struggles to be respected and promoted as a black woman in a mostly white working space of the Department of Revenue Service, as well as the absence of her father, compounded the sense of loss, separation, and pain Barbara felt at her lowest point. However, she points out that pain, passion, and purpose were all intertwined in her difficult journey to self-discovery. She reconnected to her father's disparate and dispersed family members, ascended to the highest ranks in her profession and found her voice as an inspirational speaker. Her renewed relationship with God is captured in her forthcoming book consisting of daily readings and testimonials, Transformation from Religion to Relationship: A 365 Day Blueprint for a Closer Walk with God.
There are over 3 million people making up Connecticut's population, of which nearly 500,000 are immigrants. Jamaica is the largest represented country, totaling over 36,000 people statewide.

Source: Migration Policy Institute Tabulation of data from the U.S. Census Bureau's pooled 2009-2013 American Community Survey.
The term “immigrants” (or “foreign born”) refers to people residing in the United States who were not U.S. citizens at birth. This population includes naturalized citizens, lawful permanent residents (LPRs), certain legal nonimmigrants (e.g., persons on student or work visas), those admitted under refugee or asylee status, and persons illegally residing in the United States.

By 2000 Poland replaced Italy. Between 1940 and 1990, the largest number of foreign born immigrants in Connecticut were Italians. By 2000 Poland replaced Italy.

### Immigration Throughout the Decades

Between 1940 and 1990, the largest number of foreign born immigrants in Connecticut were Italians. By 2000 Poland replaced Italy. Jamaica replaced Poland in 2010.