

# VOICES OF THE CARIBBEAN

## After slavery the struggle for equality and justice continued.

For the freed population life was still harsh after emancipation.

On 1 August, 1834, the Emancipation Act came into force. This transformed the enslaved population into 'apprenticed labourers' for a further four to six years. Following massive abolitionist campaigns in Britain the apprentice scheme was abandoned, and on 1 August 1838, the former slaves finally became 'free'.

After 1838 life for the freed peoples continued to be harsh. The Caribbean economy had been built on sugar, but from the 1840s the sugar plantations faced increasing difficulties.

They lost their protected market in Britain and could not compete against cheaper slave-grown sugar from neighbouring countries, such as the United States, Brazil and Cuba. There was further competition from European sugar beet. Racism and inequality were built into the fabric of society; the struggle for justice continued for many years.

Workers in a field of sugar cane, St Christopher (St Kitts), c.1930.  
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'We have been forced to find our place; we have survived, and increased, and have prospered. We have learned much, and have forgotten much, and have forgiven much.'

Dr Cleveland Eneas, descendant of a Yoruba boy who was enslaved by the Portuguese and apprenticed by the British in the Bahamas in the 1830s