

How Most Black People Entered Kuwait

Posted on September 25, 2019

Over the last few decades, many black people from African countries have moved to Kuwait and other countries in the Arab world like Iraq, United Emirates, and Saudi Arabia. Some have settled there completely, and they often refer to each other as 'Khaly.' The word is derived from the word 'Khal', which means Uncle or a black man. This research will look more closely at all the Black people in Kuwait, how and when they entered, and how they live today. The significance of this individual research is to highlight some of the problems that black people encounter while in Kuwait as well as how those who managed to settle in the country early enough have benefited themselves. The research will also bring to light the African History that has been neglected for quite some time now, and many people remain in the dark, not knowing what happens to their fellow black people in Kuwait and other Arabian countries.

The State of Kuwait is an Arab country at the very far northeastern edge of the Arabian Peninsula. The country shares borders with Iraq and Saudi Arabia. With an estimated population of 4.20 million people^[1], there are approximately 100 thousand (1.9%) black people in Kuwait. Most of these people are from African countries such as Sierra Leone, Cameroon, Kenya, Ethiopia, and South Africa. According to most of the Africans living in Kuwait, they claim how hard life is for them due to racism and discrimination from the Arabs and other Kuwaitis.

With the rapidly growing economy of Kuwait, many businessmen have moved here and set up their businesses which are amazingly doing quite well. They have therefore settled here permanently, and it may be hard to have them move back to their original countries. Some have gone to the extent of having families and children, making them legal citizens of Kuwait by birth. Most of these are either from Africa, America, and other Arabian countries around.

Being an expat in Kuwait is not as easy as it seems due to the unfriendly nature of most people there. Making a living especially when you are not educated, difficulties in communicating at home are also an issue unless you are active in social media and you have the platforms to communicate at home.

It has, however, been misunderstood for so long. Some Africans moved to Kuwait and other Arab countries willingly and not through the slave trade, as most people make it seem. They saw many opportunities for money and decided to settle there. Originally, it was believed that the black people were the indigenous population in Kuwait but were later gradually absorbed by other arrivals like the Europeans and other Arabs^[2].

How Most Black People Entered Kuwait

1. Slavery and human trafficking

Kuwait was among the earliest destinations for men and women trafficked from African countries for forced labor. Most of these people were trafficked in the name of being recruited for domestic work in Kuwait. The country is rated 108 among 167 countries with the highest rate of slavery, be it modern slavery or the earliest form of slavery. In modern slavery are hidden in form of recruiting agents who promise young men and women domestic work but are forced into other forms of work when they get there.

In the olden days, kidnapping and human trafficking of people was carried out while some energetic people were sold to work for the Arabs in their land. These black people had no means of returning home and were therefore trapped in foreign countries for many years. They were trapped on fishing boats and transported along the Pacific Ocean to Kuwait.

Most countries have termed human trafficking as completely illegal and are campaigning heavily against it. Although Kuwait is one of them, it still is hard to eliminate these practices. Many of the slaves opted to settle completely in the country even after they were freed from slavery. They bore families and are among the oldest people in Kuwait. They intermarried with the Arabs as well as other whites who had also been to the country through slavery or other means. It was really hard for women to cope with the harsh environments compared to men. Few of the kidnapped women who made it to Kuwait did not survive for long and would die after a few days of work.

The Arab slave trade was not as important as that of Europeans, as most people targeted women from the Sahara region who were enslaved and made members of their harems. The enslaved were not bought and sold but were kidnapped outright and transported through the Sahara to the Atlantic Ocean.

1. Modern Slavery

This is mainly done by firms and other registered corporations that recruit young people from African countries, promising them domestic work. Although some of these recruiters are legally registered, there still exist many more that are not legitimate and trick these people with fake promises. Once they reach and are introduced to these household jobs, things begin to change slowly, and the exploitations kick in.

These Black people are faced with a lot of hardships there, and while most of them are not even legal citizens of the country, this does not make it any better for them. It is really hard for them to contact their people back home or even have any means to report what they go through in their areas of work, for they barely have any free time. Their sponsors (the agents who brought them in) make it, even more, worse by controlling their passports and traveling documents.

Many are threatened with losing their residency status, and if they plan on running away from their employers, they may face detention in foreign lands or face deportation back to their countries. It is not easy for them to find other people from their country, and when they do, they still cannot do much to rescue themselves out of the miseries. Although they have formed Unions that try to fight for their rights while there. Other unions in the country, such as Gabriela UAE, do not recognize housemaids as laborers but rather are classified as slaves. Cases of people who have committed suicide emerge every day as some people get too frustrated and lose hope of ever going back home.

However, some settle well and blend in with the people they find there. Not all the recruiters manipulate their recruits, but some help them find decent jobs and make their stay in Kuwait worthwhile. With the growing economy of the country, some of these black people have highly contributed to the development of the country.

It is very hard for these nobles to acquire citizenship of Kuwait. Those black people who settled in the country before 1920 got their citizenship and enjoyed the right to go back home, still coming back to Kuwait. If black people who have moved to Kuwait for work purposes give birth either to an unknown father or a Kuwaiti father, irrespective of their origin, the child automatically becomes a citizen of the country.

On reaching there, women disappear completely and are isolated in households where they cannot be able to contact any human rights legislation informing them of their exploitation and abuse^[3]. When they cannot do their jobs well, they are returned to their recruiting agents in exchange for others. The tough ones can survive even with all the hardships along the way, making them stronger to survive in the country.^[4]

1. Search for job opportunities.

Many educated Africans, especially from South Africa, have been offered decent jobs in Kuwait.

Those lucky get the jobs, but they are not treated any better than those who are not educated at all. Kuwait is among the leading countries in the world in the production of oil, petroleum and natural gas.

This attracted many businesspeople from Africa to invest in this business and settle entirely here.

Production of oil in Kuwait started in the early 1900s when the slave trade was

widespread in Africa. Many energetic men who were captured from Africa were deported to Kuwait to be used for the thriving business. Over the last 20 years, these oil drills have resulted in unending wars between Kuwait and other countries that also want to dominate the oil trade.

In the military of Kuwait, there are about 25% black men and women on the borders of Kuwait. The ongoing wars in most of the Arabian countries this has equally attracted many young black people to move to Kuwait in search of military jobs. It is mostly through the recruiting agents. This has brought about division among the black people there as some support the war while others are entirely against it. There has been a recorded decrease in the number of black people moving there recently as the killings have gone high, and parents are distraught about their sons who move up there for these lucrative jobs.

It is very conflicting as some of the black people who have been in Kuwait for a long find it hard for their fellow black people to defend the country from threatening attacks. Others, on the other hand, believe that this war will finally bring together the black people in Kuwait along with the whites in the face of a more significant threat ahead of them. It is, however, ironic considering how long the blacks have faced discrimination and harassment in Kuwait in their fight for fair treatment as well as decent jobs and how hard they are fighting and volunteering to join the armed forces of the country.

What is it like for the Black People in Kuwait?

There have been conflicting opinions on how black people are treated in Kuwait. Most Arabians there claim that black people share the same privileges as normal Kuwaitis. In fact, they say they are treated even better than other ethnicities other than Arabs and Europeans in the country. According to them, there is nothing like racism; instead, it's more of nationalism in Kuwait.

Whereas many poor immigrant African workers keep complaining of being treated as if they are not worth anything in Kuwait, there still exist many wealthy black Muslims and traders who are treated and received like kiths and kins when they visit Kuwait. Although some people say that Kuwaitis are very friendly, especially to people from other countries, there have been unending testimonies of some black people who have been and lived in Kuwait and their experiences there. Some of the problems the black people face while in Kuwait are:

1. Discrimination and racism

Generally, in the Arab world, racism is a very common thing, and it is not surprising anymore how black people are treated in Kuwait. Domestic workers from Africa have been crying for so long about how ill they are treated, all in the name of work. They are referred to as slaves and not workers while around there. The decent jobs in the country are saved for Arabs and Europeans in the state, while

black people and some Indians are subjected to low-class and low-paying jobs.

The introduction and existence of the 'kafala' law in the country and most Arab countries bind the legal status of low-wage migrant workers directly to their employers. This gives these employers the power to completely control them by withholding their salaries and passports as well as subjecting them to all the harsh treatments possible for these black people. It is very challenging for society to fight racism when they are the real perpetrators of racism and discrimination themselves.

There is a weaker protection of migrant workers by the government of Kuwait. Labor laws provide for the eight-hour workday, but black people are subjected to a twenty-hour working schedule with no day off or sick leave. The migrants remain vulnerable to domestic abuse, forced labor, illegal detention, and deportation for minor offenses by their employers. The organizations that are supposed to be protecting the rights of these workers are sabotaged by the unlawful recruiting agents in the country, thus turning blind to the pleas of these migrants. The UN specialists have also been quiet on this issue for a long, and their only response is for the government of Kuwait to abolish the kafala system in the country.

1. Black Women's rights, sexual orientation, and gender identity

Black women in Kuwait are subjected to sexual discrimination and harassment, which sometimes leads to sexual assaults and rape for so long. Most of the male supervisors, who in most cases are Arabs, force these vulnerable female employees' sexual favors in exchange for promotions or even jobs. Subjection to physical torture, punishment, and distress leaves them desperate.

Employers are given a 100-day guarantee by the recruiting agents to return the domestic workers if they are happy with them. The workers can be re-sold to many households in two years as the agents are trying to please their clients. Once employed, they find it hard to leave due to lack of money and threats from their employers that moving is illegal until their contract is over.

Domestic workers have found it rough all through as they are used as sex objects by their employers. During the war, the women are also subjected to rape by ruthless military men. With no laws that prohibit domestic violence or rape, Kuwait has no regulations that protect these people from violence. They also face these abuses at the hands of police, who are supposed to be protecting them but instead take advantage of them.

^[5]Most of the women interviewed in this case describe some form of abuse from the police and military men that leads to torture, degrading, and humiliating treatment if they try to object or defend themselves^[6]. Some cases of suicide and killings have also emerged from this too.

Several women's rights improving the status of women as well as promoting them into leadership all over the world have been in the case of this country. Although the crime rates against women have noticeably reduced, there still are a few cases now and then from the black people living there.

1. Freedom of expression

The majority of black people in Kuwait have been denied their freedom of expression. They have no means to air out what they go through in the country. The existence of the kafala system makes it even worse for these migrants. Their employers have full control of their lives while in the country. The press is mostly quiet on the issues when they are supposed to be airing them out for the world to know what happens in the country.

1. Religion

With most people in Kuwait being of the Islamic religion, the few black Christians in the region lack the freedom to express their forms of worship. They are denied the right to celebrate Christian holidays such as Christmas and Easter, and they are forced to practice Islamic religion while there.^[7] Although they are a minority with only 650,000 – 750,000, they don't get to enjoy the privileges other religions hold in the country. The constitution, however, allows for religious freedom and there exist many churches in the city of Kuwait. Many domestic workers are denied this freedom and do not attend masses when required.

Black people in leadership in Kuwait

The black people who arrived and settled early in Kuwait have made a lot out of themselves. They have been given the privileges of being elected into offices, clergymen, community activists as well as educators. The black leaders in Kuwait were equally adamant on all the sensitive issues of how their fellow black soldiers would have reacted if they were assigned to restore order in the places that had been affected by the war. Although some participated in the military conflict for their gains, some were genuine in helping rebuild Kuwait from their oppressors. With the whole Black Power ideology, the few black people who had managed to push their way up regarding being recognized and respected in the society. With very many black soldiers in the country, education has been boosted higher, and there are reduced cases of special racial and ethical admissions.

In conclusion, this research paper has brought to light the plight of all the black people in Kuwait, how and when they got there as well as how they are living there. Although it was that most of the Africans in the country were brought there through the slave trade, the paper shows that some went

there willingly and contributed to the growth of the economy. The African culture and History has been spread all over the Arabian countries and is being practiced there. ^[8] The paper has explored the relation of the black people with the Arabians in the country and other immigrants living in Kuwait.

“Bibliography”

Bennett Adrian, *Hip Hop Am Main: The Localization of Rap Music and Hip Hop Culture,* 'Media, Culture and Society', 1995, 21: 77-92.

Bromberger Brian "New book details Windsor Supreme Court victory." Bay Area Reporter. Retrieved October 16, 2015.

Crystal Jones, *The Transformation of an Oil-State. Boulder, CO and San Francisco, CA:* Westview Press, 2010.

Drydakis Nikkel. *Women's Sexual Orientation and Labor Market Outcomes in Greece. Feminist Economics*, 2011, 17, 89-117.

Ghabra, S. (1997) 'Kuwait and the Dynamics of Socio-Economic Change,' Middle East Journal 51: 358-372.

Longva, A. (1993) 'Kuwaiti Women at a Crossroads: Privileged Development and the Constraints of Ethnic Stratification,' International Journal of Middle East Studies 25: 443-456.

Maan Madina, *Arabic-English Dictionary of the Modern Literary Language*, 1973.

Ramesh Randeep. "More black people jailed." *In England and Wales proportionally than in the US.* "The Guardian. October 11, 2010.

Wilson, Flake. (2003). *Organizational Behavior and Gender* (2nd ed.). Aldershot: Ashgate.

1. Adrian Bennett, *Hip Hop Am Main: The Localization of Rap Music and Hip Hop Culture,* 'Media, Culture and Society', 1995, 21: 77-92. ↑
2. Bennett Adrian, *Hip Hop Am Main: The Localization of Rap Music and Hip Hop Culture,* 'Media, Culture and Society', 1995, 21: 77-92. ↑
3. Crystal Jones, *The Transformation of an Oil-State. Boulder, CO and San Francisco, CA:* Westview Press, 2010. ↑
4. Crystal Jones, *The Transformation of an Oil-State. Boulder, CO and San Francisco, CA:* Westview Press, 2010. ↑
5. Drydakis Nikkel. *Women's Sexual Orientation and Labor Market Outcomes in Greece. Feminist Economics*, 2011, 17, 89-117. ↑
6. Drydakis Nikkel. *Women's Sexual Orientation and Labor Market Outcomes in Greece. Feminist Economics*, 2011, 17, 89-117. Maan Madina, *Arabic-English Dictionary of the Modern Literary*

Language, 1973. ↑

7. Wilson, Flake. (2003). *Organizational Behavior and Gender (2nd ed.)*. Aldershot: Ashgat. ↑
8. Longva, A. (1993) ` *Kuwaiti Women at a Crossroads: Privileged Development and the Constraints of Ethnic Stratification,* ' *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 25: 443-456. ↑