

For Immediate Release

Diversity UK honours Paul Stephenson OBE

24th November 2016, London: Diversity UK yesterday honoured race equality campaigner Paul Stephenson OBE with a Lifetime Achievement Award for his work on diversity and inclusion. Mr Stephenson was presented with his award by Helen Grant MP, Dilip Joshi MBE, Chair of Diversity UK and Anil Bhanot OBE, Chair of the Ethnic Minority Foundation, on Wednesday 23rd November 2016. Helen Grant MP, who gave the first Diversity UK lecture named in Paul Stephenson's honour, spoke about the need to celebrate and recognise the contribution he has made to race equality. *"His courage and bravery paved the way for me and for many of us in this room to pursue our own hopes and dreams"* she said, *"and in doing so made this country a better, fairer, happier and more equal place"*. She said that Paul Stephenson was a true inspiration.

As a young social worker, in 1963 Stephenson led a boycott of the Bristol Omnibus Company, protesting against its refusal to employ Black or Asian drivers or conductors. After a 60-day boycott supported by thousands of Bristolians, the company revoked its colour bar in August and later employed its first non-white bus conductor, an Asian, Raghubir Singh.

Mr Stephenson's campaigning did not end there as Anil Bhanot OBE explained in his citation of Paul, *"those were the years when posters displaying signs of 'no Blacks, no Irish, no Dogs' were not uncommon and in 1964 Paul Stephenson got arrested for taking too long to finish his half pint of beer in a Bristol pub. He was, however, later acquitted of that. But all this activism against racial discrimination resulted in the Race Relations Act in 1965."*

"Coincidentally in America, thanks to Martin Luther King's civil rights movement, the Voting Rights Act also came into force in 1965, which allowed Blacks a vote for the first time there. Whilst Martin Luther King has rightly earned his place in world history it seems to me Paul Stephenson's name has been overlooked, whitewashed from British history."

"We need Paul Stephenson's name in the history books for people to understand and identify with the struggles of that first ever British Black movement. It's always the first movements which are significant when we write laws on a blank canvas."

In his acceptance speech, Mr Stephenson urged the audience *"to do their duty to stand up to racism and tackle it for the sake of their children and their children's children"*. He later signed copies of his book 'Memoirs of a Black Englishman' (Tangent Books) for members of Diversity UK and guests.

Ends

Hi-res images are available from this link:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/4y4ggi37wm54lrz/AAC4VeDzDzfSfpQiL7itwuWLa?dl=0>

For further details, captions or interview requests, please contact:

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Notes for Editors:

About Paul Stephenson OBE

Paul Stephenson OBE, is a community worker, activist and long-time campaigner for civil rights for the British African-Caribbean community in Bristol, England. As a young social worker, in 1963 Stephenson led a boycott of the Bristol Omnibus Company, protesting against its refusal to employ Black or Asian drivers or conductors. After a 60-day boycott supported by thousands of Bristolians, the company revoked its colour bar in August. In 1964 Stephenson achieved national fame when he refused to leave a public house until he was served, resulting in a trial on a charge of failing to leave a licensed premises. His campaigns were instrumental in paving the way for the first Race Relations Act, in 1965. Paul Stephenson is a Freeman of the City of Bristol and was awarded an OBE in 2009. In July 2014, Mr Stephenson was awarded an honorary degree (Doctor of Law) by the University of Bristol *"for his dedication to fighting for equality and civil rights across Bristol and around the world for over 60 years"*.

About Helen Grant MP

Helen Grant MP was elected to represent the Parliamentary Constituency of Maidstone & the Weald on 5th May 2010. On 5th September 2012 she was appointed Joint Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the Ministry of Justice and for Women's and Equalities issues in David Cameron's first ministerial re-shuffle since the general election. On October 7th 2013 she was promoted in the Prime Minister's second reshuffle to the high profile role of Minister for Sport and Tourism.

Born in London, Helen was brought up on the Raffles council estate in Carlisle for much of her early childhood. She quickly showed sporting talent, becoming an under-16 Judo Champion in North of England and Southern Scotland. Helen moved on to obtain a law degree at the University of Hull, undertook solicitors' finals at the College of Law in Guildford and qualified as a solicitor in 1988. In 1996 Helen set up Grants Solicitors as a specialist firm focused on dealing with the problems of family breakdown, and domestic violence in particular. From 2005-2007, Helen was also a Non-Executive Director of the Croydon NHS Primary Care Trust, involved in overseeing the delivery of integrated healthcare for the community.

About The Ethnic Minority Foundation

The Ethnic Minority Foundation (EMF) is a national registered charity created in 1999. It is an independent organisation that seeks to strengthen democratic values, reduce poverty and injustice in society, and address the growing inequalities in the world system. EMF's social justice programme has sought to tackle some of the most difficult issues facing societies today. It has worked to try and protect children from exploitation; safeguard the rights of women and other vulnerable groups; tackle poverty and seek social applications for new technologies. Currently most of its work is focused on social enterprises and providing services and opportunities to local communities.

www.emfoundation.org.uk

About Anil Bhanot OBE

Anil Bhanot is the Chairman of the Ethnic Minority Foundation and as Advisory Board Members of Diversity UK. He is the founder of Rita Trust, established to carry out charitable activities within the context of an exploration of Rita, the Natural Law that governs our lives. He was awarded his OBE in 2010, for services to the Hindu Community and to Inter-Faith Relations. Anil's accountancy practice, Bhanot & Co., is based in West London.

About Diversity UK

Diversity UK is a think tank to research, advocate and promote ideas for improving diversity and inclusion in Britain. It is an evidence-based initiative that seeks to influence policy, enhance civic engagement and improve the perception of the minority ethnic community in Britain. Diversity UK delivers its objectives by undertaking research, facilitating debates, hosting roundtable meetings and publishing a monthly newsletter focusing on contemporary issues.

Founded in 2012, Diversity UK is a registered charity (No: 1155189) in England & Wales run by Mr Dilip Joshi MBE as Chair; Ms Sushila Khoot as Deputy Chair and Mrs Lopa Patel MBE as CEO. For further information visit <http://diversityuk.org/>